HOPE IN 2011 • Katrina vanden Heuvel

THE Nation.

THE END OF NEW DEAL LIBERALISM
WILLIAM GREIDER

A PIVOTAL MOMENT

KABUKI DEMOCRACY—AND HOW TO FIX IT
ERIC ALTERMAN

JANUARY 24, 2011
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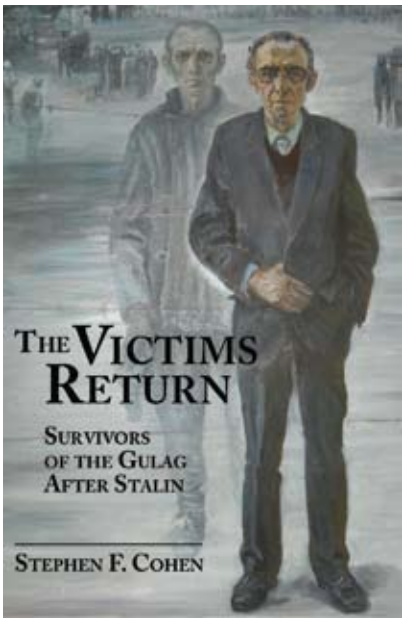

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Exchange

Who Speaks for Immigrants?

San Francisco

As a *Nation* writer, I am not in the habit of publicly critiquing other *Nation* writers, especially on articles about immigration. That's because I mostly agree with the excellent coverage concerning an issue I've worked on and reported about for some time. But I am moved to change my habit because of observations I have about Daniel Altschuler's "Immigrant Activists Regroup" [Dec. 20].

The article makes crucial and unfounded assumptions that orbit around a critical mistake made by the mainstream media: talking about immigrant rights groups in Washington as if they speak for the larger immigrant rights movement. Although these groups do play an important role in shaping policy, they have a very different role in the nonpolicy arena of the "movement" mentioned in the article. Groups like the Center for Community Change, the National Immigration Forum, the National Council of La Raza and others highlighted by Altschuler have collectively received more than $100 million to advocate for Comprehensive Immigration Reform (CIR), legislation that combines the legalization of 11 to 12 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States with punitive policies that will jail, deport and terrorize immigrants even more. The DC groups backed legislation like the McCain-Kennedy bill of 2006–07, which contained about 100 pages focused on legalization and about 700 pages focused on punishment.

Altschuler fails to mention how CIR and its DC advocates have fragmented and divided the immigrant rights movement, which is also made up of groups that support neither CIR nor the DC groups. Unlike the outside-the-Beltway immigrant rights groups that organized the spectacular marches of 2006—groups that have been consistently and vociferously critical of President Obama and the Democrats since 2006—Obama's allies in the immigrant rights movement have, until this past year, largely avoided criticizing the president. Even after reports that Obama had broken records on persecution, prosecution and deportation of immigrants, the DC groups provided him a Jumbotron-size video platform at their mobilization for CIR. When these groups do criticize Obama, their approach is to target DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano or ICE Director John Morton, a very different approach from the Bush era, when they regularly named and denounced Bush. Altschuler's claims that the DC groups organized marches and did civil disobedience to "express their frustration with Obama's de facto enforcement-only policy" are, at best, partly and only recently true. The criticisms have come only this past year, when the terror rained on immigrant communities by the administration became so devastatingly bad that nobody in immigrant rights could ignore it without appearing callous, co-opted or irrelevant.

I again saw the DC groups' tacit submission to the Democrats when I called the heads of some of these groups to get their opinion about the most recent CIR legislation, presented by Chuck Schumer. When I asked about Schumer's ideas on including, for example, a national ID card as part of CIR, the DC leaders' response was either to avoid me, say "no comment" or declare that they needed time to "study" the matter further (the ACLU and other outside-the-Beltway immigrant rights groups, by contrast, condemned Schumer's national ID proposal before, during and after the CIR debate).

Quoting only the heads of DC groups simply reproduces the MSM's spin and keeps Obama's depredations on immigration out of the public view. The inability to find actual immigrants, immigrant voices to speak for immigrants, is also noticeable in this article. While nonimmigrants can and should speak in the movement (full disclosure: I, a US-born Salvadoran, used to lead an immigrant rights organization), I always try to find and include in my stories the voices of those most affected by immigration policies; many of them can be heard disagreeing with the DC consensus on immigration in the vast immigrant universe just beyond the Beltway.

Roberto Lovato

letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 26)

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The Nation.
since 1865

Hope in 2011

As we head into another year in the long struggle between reform and reaction in our country, with conservatives and the Tea Party wielding new power in Washington, history offers some solace. Dark periods come and go. They can be overcome when those of us who are affronted by private greed and reactionary overreach stand together and fight for time-tested as well as innovative solutions to what plagues us, when we revitalize independent organizing and craft strategies to rebuild, revive and reclaim democracy.

COMMENT

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., who wrote an annual essay on civil rights for this magazine from 1961 to 1966, often spoke of how the arc of history, while long, bends toward justice. But King understood that it did not bend by itself. Social, cultural and political activism is what forces change, even in the most difficult times. We should not forget that when King began to emerge as a national figure, Republicans held the White House, Joe McCarthy still served in the Senate and almost every office in Alabama was held by a segregationist. Nothing about our moment is as daunting as that—except, perhaps, the challenge posed by the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* ruling, which will only strengthen the domination of money and corporate power over our politics. But there, too, history provides inspiration: in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the Senate was almost wholly owned by the railroad and other trusts. Still, the Progressive movement followed, taming them.

If the Progressives could tame the forces of money a century ago, and if King and his allies could bend the arc of history, so can we.

Gazing out over our current political terrain, it's clear that we have a lot of work ahead of us. We've helped build a society that is more socially tolerant than it was a quarter-century ago, but when it comes to public policy, economic outcomes and control of government, the story is different. The broad movement of American politics in recent decades has been toward greater inequality, the discrediting of public institutions and a near idolatry of private markets at the expense of corporate accountability.

I believe this is a pivotal moment for *The Nation*. Launched in the days after the Civil War, in July 1865, this magazine is one of the few longstanding media institutions that have worked to bring about lasting social and political change. In the time ahead, we will need to rededicate ourselves to our mission by confronting and countering misinformation, bigotry and greed with tough, intelligent and principled journalism while sowing new and alternative—often heretical—ideas.

In every part of our nation and world there are people engaged in courageous activism, and they are brimming with good ideas. But too often they are not well connected to one another, or they lack a larger vision or strategic purpose. *The Nation* and TheNation.com will seek to act as a forum for strategic thinking—connecting movements and their members with ideas and strategies while providing a long-term vision of a more just and peaceful society and world.

In some ways, this work will necessarily be defensive or oppositional. We will have to protect Social Security, Medicare and other civilizing reforms and prevent them from being slashed at the national and state levels. We will have to defend the public sphere from assault. We must oppose an unwinnable war in Afghanistan, and we must expose the depredations and fallacies of the global "war on terror." And we will have to fight corpo-

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ratist and callous Republicans, as well as those in the Democratic Party, who would diminish working- and middle-class security and increase inequality and poverty.

In fighting these battles, we should also be challenging the limits of debate, laying down clear alternatives for the future of our economy and politics, and galvanizing broader support. New coalitions and a reinvigorated inside/outside strategy could move public opinion across a transpartisan spectrum. There remain strong allies within this administration and Congress with whom we can work. The consequences of inhumane cuts in state and city budgets—ravaged pensions, gutted schools, mass unemployment—could lead people of all parties to a renewed understanding and appreciation of government's role. All the while, we can do a better job of mobilizing people who are demoralized and fearful about their future but not yet ready to give up on the promise of democratic politics.

Legislative gridlock is likely at the federal level, but we should pressure the president to make deft use of the executive's regulatory and rule-making powers—by, for example, empowering workers, advancing immigration reform and strengthening the EPA's mandate. Despite Republican gains at the state level, many cities and states remain our laboratories of democracy. In Vermont, for example, the new governor, Peter Shumlin, is working with a citizens' coalition to support "Medicare for All." California is slashing greenhouse gas emissions and creating jobs through renewable energy, retrofitting, transit and infrastructure.

Building stronger coalitions around issues like drug and prison reform, living-wage campaigns, food justice and security, and environmental sustainability will lay the groundwork for progress in the years ahead—and engage a younger generation seeking a more humane and equitable politics. And we should not forget that some of the most inspiring ideas and movements for democratic renewal will come from abroad. These are also times when we'll need more creative strategies, including civil disobedience—to confront the climate crisis, joblessness, foreclosures and the war in Afghanistan.

Joining the battle of ideas and taking on a status quo that is not working will be key. Challenging the limits of austerity and the ideology of budget-balancing with alternative proposals and ideas will be a central part of our work. As long as a suffocating establishment consensus on deficit-slashing and tax cuts for the wealthy holds, America's politics is reduced to posturing.

The times demand a balance between short-term actions and long-term strategic thinking. Just as, in years past, the right has built movements around long-term causes in the face of great odds, we must be patient, stay committed to our principles and work for victory and not fear defeat. And as we do, we'll build a humane politics of passion and conviction that will reconnect with people where they live and work.

The late Studs Terkel, a true friend of *The Nation*, believed that hope was not simply optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for. For 145 years, *The Nation* has subscribed to that belief. It is time to summon the spirit of hope Studs spoke of, never underestimating the tough landscape we live and work in but also remembering that in the past we have overcome more formidable obstacles. KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

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Noted.

FILIBUSTER REFORM FILIBUSTERED: Filibuster reform has never come easy, and only the most naïve observers ever thought it would be achieved without a fight this year. Senate Democrats who propose to constrain abuses of the parliamentary procedure—by requiring that senators who seek to block action on a bill do so openly and engage in the traditional speechifying rather than rely on secret holds and threats—got a sense of the perilous politics of the reform process when the new Senate was called into session.

For all the talk of rewriting the rules on the first day, majority leader **Harry Reid** was not going there. Though Reid admits that Senate filibuster rules have been "abused, and abused gratuitously…in truly unprecedented fashion," indications are that the Democratic leader hopes to cut a deal with his Republican counterpart, **Mitch McConnell**, to place loose limits on the types of bills that can be blocked without creating a "nuclear" confrontation between the two parties. How far Reid will bend, and how far reformers will get, will be defined over the next few weeks.

Conservatives, who just six years ago were talking about having Vice President **Dick Cheney** arbitrarily alter filibuster rules, are organizing to defend the status quo as nothing less than the intent of the founders. They are, of course, fostering a fantasy. Filibuster reform of the sort proposed by Democratic senators like New Mexico's **Tom Udall** and Oregon's **Jeff Merkley** are moving the Senate toward more honest debate and strengthening democracy.

But can that truth cut through the spin? The **Fix the Senate Now** coalition (fixthesenatenow.com) is working hard to spread the word. But the volume has to be turned up. The only way that filibuster reform will happen in this Congress is if progressives across the country make this procedural fight central to their activism over the next few weeks. Today's Democratic senators need to hear, as Democratic senators did in the 1950s and '60s (when filibuster reformers sought to clear barriers to civil rights legislation), that their base voters recognize the supposedly arcane debate about Senate rules to be essential to the broader progressive agenda.

JOHN NICHOLS

RAHM REDUX: **Rahm Emanuel** is off and running for mayor of Chicago, but his ghost may soon be making a return to the White House in the form of fellow Chicagoan **Bill Daley**, whom President Obama is considering naming as Rahm's replacement as chief of staff. The post is currently filled by low-key Obama aide **Pete Rouse**.

Daley, brother of outgoing Chicago Mayor **Richard Daley**, was commerce secretary under **Bill Clinton**, the chief architect of NAFTA, chair of **Al Gore**'s 2000 presidential campaign, a top adviser and fundraiser for the Obama campaign and, most recently, Midwest chair of **JPMorgan Chase**. He shares the corporate centrism of Emanuel and, when it comes to economic issues, may be more conservative. As former AFL-CIO head **John Sweeney** once said, Daley stood "squarely on the opposite side of working families."

When Daley was president of telecommunications giant SBC, he lobbied extensively on its behalf. He publicly chided the Obama administration for pursuing healthcare reform (he has served on the board of drugmaker **Merck**), advised the **Chamber of Commerce** on Wall Street regulation (the Chamber wanted less of it) and reportedly urged Obama's team to drop the most popular provision of the financial reform bill—the **Consumer Financial Protection Agency**. When Daley joined the board of the corporate-aligned Democratic group **Third Way** in July, board chair **John Vogelstein** said that Daley's tasks would include "reforming entitlements"—a clever code for cutting Social Security and Medicare. Despite all this, Obama is considering making Daley the focal point of his White House in year three. Didn't the president learn anything from Emanuel's disastrous tenure at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue?

On January 3 **Politico** reported that Republican House Oversight chair **Darrell Issa** brazenly asked more than 150 companies and trade associations to specify which regulations and consumer protections they'd like to gut in the new Congress. It was precisely the type of story Democrats should pounce on to paint the GOP as a wholly owned subsidiary of corporate America. Instead, the Obama administration is close to appointing a JPMorgan Chase exec to burnish its "pro-business" credentials. Talk about mixed messaging!

In fact, the Obama administration has tried its damnedest to plot the "moderate, centrist course" that Daley accuses it of forsaking—abandoning the public option in healthcare reform, loading up the stimulus with tax cuts, extending the Bush tax cuts, escalating the war in Afghanistan, and stepping away from potentially divisive fights over immigration reform and cap and trade. Indeed, it's amazing that the administration doesn't get more credit from the business community for saving the banks, rescuing the auto industry, stabilizing the economy and preventing another Great Depression. What Americans want from the Obama administration is jobs and relief, not another banker running the show.

ARI BERMAN

SCALIA'S CONSTITUTION: With his agreement to serve as the first lecturer in Minnesota Representative **Michele Bachmann**'s seminars on how Congressional conservatives should approach constitutional issues, Supreme Court Justice **Antonin Scalia** removed whatever remaining doubt there might have been about the lengths to which he will go to advance ideological and partisan agendas. But the Tea Partisans who are taking their cues from Scalia would be ill advised to take the justice's counsel when it comes to equal protection issues. Asked by an interviewer about discrimination based on gender and sexuality, Scalia told *California Lawyer* magazine:

"Certainly the Constitution does not require discrimination on the basis of sex. The only issue is whether it prohibits it. It doesn't." That's an odd read of the Fourteenth Amendment, which specifically declares that states cannot "deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." It also raises a question: is Scalia telling us that the Constitution affords no protection from discrimination to Michele Bachmann?

JOHN NICHOLS

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Today's Color Line

COMMENT

Racial Barrier Falls, the *New York Times* proclaimed in its much-noted headline the day after Barack Obama's election as president in 2008. Everyone in the world, it seems, knows that Obama is the first African-American president of the United States. But a look at the political landscape two years into his presidency suggests that the racial barrier retains remarkable staying power. Today, as throughout American history, few blacks occupy the highest echelons of our elective politics.

The many hundreds of state governors in our history include only four African-Americans. The first was P.B.S. Pinchback, who served briefly in Louisiana during Reconstruction, the turbulent era following the Civil War when Southern blacks briefly enjoyed the right to vote and hold office. More than a century elapsed between Pinchback and the second black governor, L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia, who took office in 1990. Then came David Paterson of New York, for the past three years. Today the sole black governor is Deval Patrick of Massachusetts. And only he and Wilder were actually elected—the others were lieutenant governors who moved up after the governor's impeachment or resignation.

Around 2,000 men and women have served in the Senate since the ratification of the Constitution 222 years ago, but only six have been African-American, a ratio far worse than one out of forty-four presidents. Indeed, only three of the fifty states have ever elected a black senator. The first two came during Reconstruction—Hiram Revels and Blanche Bruce of Mississippi. After a hiatus of more than eighty years, Edward Brooke won election from Massachusetts in 1966. During the past twenty years, Carol Moseley-Braun, Obama and, most recently, Roland Burris have served from Illinois. But in the 112th Congress, which convened on January 5, not one of the 100 senators is black.

The new House of Representatives does have forty-two black members, not counting nonvoting delegates from the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. More than half represent predominantly black districts in states where slavery existed on the eve of the Civil War. And with some exceptions, those from the North and West, like New York's Charles Rangel, serve constituencies with large African-American populations where they do not have to attract many white votes.

These figures offer a striking reminder of the almost insuperable barriers that have kept African-Americans from the most powerful offices in the land. Most blacks who have held high national positions have been appointed, not elected—for example, ambassador to the United Nations Andrew Young, Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice, and Supreme Court Justices Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Thomas. Black candidates generally find it nearly impossible to win a majority of the white vote. Obama did when he ran for the Senate in 2004, but his Republican opponent, Alan Keyes, was also black—the only such contest in American history. In 2008 Obama carried only 43 percent of the white electorate.

Whatever Obama's successes and failures as president, his election will remain a symbolic watershed in our country's troubled racial history. The all-but-total absence of other blacks in the highest offices today underscores both Obama's singular achievement and how far we remain from a postracial politics.

ERIC FONER

Eric Foner, a member of the Nation *editorial board, is DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University. His most recent book is* The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

The Message Other Mayors Got From How Newark's Corey Booker Came Out Of the Great Storm

Let's say that you're smart, not corrupt and do good.
That's fine, but what's listed above'll
Be nothing compared with one picture of you
Knee deep in the snow with a shovel.

Ike & *The Nation*

COMMENT

Much public attention has been focused in recent weeks on Dwight Eisenhower's farewell address, delivered fifty years ago this month and responsible for introducing the concept of the "military-industrial complex" into the English language.

A major reason for the enduring interest in the speech is that Eisenhower was a lifelong pillar of the military-industrial complex he criticized. His assessment of the dark side of America's military machine would have been unusual coming from any American president; for it to come from a five-star general who had amassed and led one of the largest military forces in human history to win World War II was nothing short of astonishing. (And, of course, some might say hypocritical, given the massive buildup in America's nuclear arsenal during the Eisenhower presidency, from about 1,000 weapons to about 23,000 by the time he delivered his speech.)

But it's also true that the fundamental idea contained in Eisenhower's farewell speech—the notion that public and private forces conspire to keep military spending high, threatening democracy and human liberty—did not originate with Eisenhower or the group of advisers who prepared his speech.

In slightly different form, the "merchants of death" thesis was one of the most potent political issues of the 1930s and early '40s.

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This thesis captivated the antiwar American left, as represented by *The Nation*, as well as "prairie populist" Republicans and politically powerful World War I veterans, who believed that the United States had been duped by powerful military and financial interests into joining the Great War.

Indeed, there is a little-known episode from this era that directly ties Dwight Eisenhower to *The Nation* in a surprising way. Eisenhower spent much of the period between the wars performing different research and administrative tasks for the War Department. One of these tasks, begun in 1929, involved a close study of how the economy should be organized in case another major war enveloped it (thereby making Eisenhower as much an early architect of the military-industrial complex as he would later be a critic).

Virtually no one, inside or outside the military, approved of the way military procurement had been handled during World War I. The left excoriated "war profiteering," pointing to companies that had dramatically raised prices to supply much-needed matériel, while the War Department deplored shoddy equipment, inconsistent supplies and widespread cost overruns. Eisenhower was assigned to coordinate Congressional hearings into these matters and to assemble a draft report on how to better structure the relationship between the military and industry.

And so it came to pass that Eisenhower was reading *The Nation*, perhaps not entirely voluntarily, to learn about military spending and profiteering. In the summer of 1930 *The Nation* published a brief but unusual exposé titled, "The Profits of War." In it, a law professor named Forrest Reserve Black claimed to have seen internal War Department memorandums from 1924 indicating that for several years the government had been contracting with private manufacturers to supply matériel for a yet-to-be-declared war. According to Black, an agreement called the War Department Adjustable Price Contract guaranteed munitions makers a certain level of production and a price that would include a "normal" profit; the contract would come into effect upon a declaration of war or similar national emergency.

Citing an almost certainly pseudonymous military source named Major Mars, Black asserted that the War Department was acting "upon the advice of big business men and of the National Association of Manufacturers." Black noted that there was no specific legal authority for such a provision, and he predicted that munitions makers would exploit war hysteria to extract the highest possible price from the government. "If the American people really desire to prevent a repetition of 1917–18 they ought to demand full information about this War Department alliance with business interests; for experience has proved over and over the dangers to peace that lurk in the profits of war," Black wrote.

The article caught the eye of the editor of the *Manitowoc Times* in Wisconsin, who wrote an editorial accusing the War Department of "an outrageous assumption of power." This, in turn, caught the eye of the office of the assistant secretary of war, which felt the need to set both publications straight. A letter was drafted for Gen. George Van Horn Moseley to sign, politely pointing out to each publication that there was indeed a Congressional authorization for such mobilization, the National Defense Act of 1920. Furthermore, the general asserted that there was a public interest in rationalizing the military contracting process that had gone awry during World War I. The drafting, editing and mailing of the letters was overseen by an assistant within the War Department: Dwight D. Eisenhower.

It appears *The Nation* never published this letter, but it hardly lost interest in the topic. While many national publications ignored or scratched their heads over Eisenhower's farewell, *The Nation* applauded him for speaking "like the statesman and democratic leader we had so long hungered for him to become."

And thus, oddly, in the early days of John F. Kennedy's administration—elected to increase military spending to close a mythical "missile gap"—there was an inadvertent alliance between the Eisenhower wing of the GOP and *The Nation*. In a confidential March 1961 memo to Eisenhower and—yes—Richard Nixon, longtime Ike aide Bryce Harlow boasted that the military-industrial-complex portion of the farewell speech "turns out to be curiously yeasty." He cited as evidence that "*Nation* magazine, of all things, has suddenly interested itself in the same thing, and has run a column on the subject written by Jerry Greene." (Greene would go on to publish a series of *Nation* columns on the military budget throughout 1961.)

This surely marks one of the few moments in history when top leaders of the Republican Party believed that political gain could emerge from aligning with *The Nation* to advocate curbs on military spending. The Vietnam War and Ronald Reagan created a spectacular split between the two institutions. But who knows? Extended Afghanistan-Iraq fatigue and mounting public debt might yet spark a reunion. JAMES LEDBETTER

James Ledbetter, editor in charge of Reuters.com, is the author of Unwarranted Influence: Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Military-Industrial Complex, *published this month by Yale University Press.*

Clampdown in Hungary

COMMENT

When the nationalist party Fidesz swept into power in Hungary this past April, one of its first acts was to cut funding for the country's alternative theaters. A casualty was an annual independent theater festival that was to have taken place in September. When the money was abruptly withdrawn in August, remembers Andrea Tompa, one of the festival organizers and head of the Hungarian Theater Critics' Association, she and her colleagues were disappointed but not shocked. Hungary's economy, after all, had been in crisis for at least two years. But looking back on that moment now, Tompa sees an early warning of the deterioration of Hungary's fragile democracy.

"The amount of money in question was minuscule," Tompa says, especially in contrast to the untouched, much higher allotments for Hungary's longstanding system of state-supported repertory theaters, with their buildings and salaried staffs. "But the ruling party was sending a symbolic message. They wanted to shut up the independent theater, which is always more free, less conventional, more subversive."

Then in November, the institutional theater came under fire as well, and the theater community couldn't help linking the at-

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tacks to Fidesz's simultaneous tightening grip on free expression in general.

On January 1—the same day Hungary assumed the six-month, rotating presidency of the European Union—a media law passed by Parliament on December 21 went into effect, essentially reinstating state censorship. The law establishes a National Media and Communications Authority to monitor all forms of news media—newspapers, television, radio, even blogs. It can impose fines as high as $950,000 on coverage it deems unbalanced or "offensive to human dignity," seize reporters' notes, search editorial offices and demand confidential business information. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán waved off criticism from EU members as so much unseemly Western meddling, but considered alongside the fate of the theaters, the ominous signs are hard to dismiss.

Elected in a landslide in the face of public disillusionment with the failures and corruption of the Socialist Party, which had been in office for the previous eight years, Fidesz won 263 of 386 seats in Parliament and easily maintains the two-thirds majority required to change Hungary's Constitution. If that weren't enough, Fidesz is being pushed from the right by the neofascist party, Jobbik, which won forty-seven seats, having run an explicitly anti-Roma and anti-Semitic campaign. (The ousted socialists held on to fifty-nine seats.)

In November Jobbik launched a putsch against the highly successful director of Budapest's National Theatre, Róbert Alföldi. Though Alföldi has garnered popular and critical acclaim at home and abroad, and even earned a profit in the first two and a half years of his contract—not slated to expire until June 2013—Jobbik has been denouncing him as a Jew, a homosexual and a traitor and calling for his ouster. Fidesz has apparently heeded the party's demand; according to theater artists in Budapest, a party-loyal substitute has been chosen and has been giving interviews to the press in which he scorns Alföldi for the "sin" of reinterpreting the classical repertory.

Politically opportunistic attacks on art are familiar enough to Americans. Some of the language hurled at Alföldi sounds like the vitriol spewed at the David Wojnarowicz video conservatives recently bullied the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery into removing, to cite our latest example. But such charges are more dangerous in Hungary, which has little experience of democracy. "We haven't developed much civil society yet," explains László Jakab Orsós, director of the PEN World Voices Festival and, until his term ran out in June (shortly after Fidesz's election), director of the Hungarian Cultural Center in New York. (Fidesz has yet to appoint a replacement.) "We have a few small, brave organizations, but in twenty years we haven't built the capability to handle such severe attacks. Everything has changed so quickly in less than six months, and we are losing most of the achievements of the last two decades."

If the situation is not as dire as in Belarus, where leaders of the Belarus Free Theater were arrested or driven into hiding in late December in Aleksandr Lukashenko's campaign of repression, Hungary is "halfway to a dictatorship," says Anna Lengyel, a dramaturge and independent producer at Budapest's PanoDrama, which fosters international exchanges of new plays. "And it is our own fault. There is no Soviet army this time."

Hungary's theater draws Fidesz's attention because, unlike theater in the United States, it is culturally important. There's not even a small community without a state-subsidized theater within thirty miles, Tompa notes, and in a population of 10 million, nearly 5 million tickets are sold each year. Even when most of those buildings are presenting light commercial entertainment, the historical role of Hungary's theater has not been forgotten. "It was the most important forum in the Communist period," Lengyel says. "Especially in the milder '70s and '80s, the censors would allow some kind of freedom as long as there was no open criticism of the regime. Winking at the audience was OK."

Hungary's theater artists may have to learn to wink again. "We will remember 2010 as a turning point," predicts Mate Gaspar, deputy director of the Open Society Institute's Arts and Culture Program, based in Budapest. "We have courageous artists in the theater who will reposition themselves as the internal opposition," he says. The question, though, he adds, given Orbán's enormous popularity and the support Fidesz maintains, even among Hungary's youth, is whether the artists will find an audience this time.

ALISA SOLOMON

Alisa Solomon, a drama critic and professor at Columbia University's School of Journalism, is the author of Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender *and, with Tony Kushner, editor of* Wrestling With Zion: Progressive Jewish-American Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.

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The progressive community lost a number of heroes, both well-known and not, in 2010, including Howard Zinn, Elizabeth Edwards and Ben Sonnenberg. Look back on their lives and the difference they made, in our slide show: **Remembering Those We Lost in 2010**.

Get your fix of Greg Mitchell's popular **WikiLeaks coverage**, fresh every day.

What should Congressional Democrats focus on first while adapting to a divided Congress? Tell us in our new reader poll!

If Europe's biggest social worry is the integration—or not—of Muslims, nothing would be smarter than positive gestures toward Turkey. Unfortunately, the EU isn't making any, writes Barbara Crossette in **Muslims Get the Message as Turkey's Bid to Join the EU Stalls**.

The Defense Department's December review of Afghanistan strategy glossed over real challenges to the US involvement in the country's political and economic development. Greg Kaufmann interviews policy analyst Michael Shank in **A Real December Review for Afghanistan**, on how the United States could get serious about promoting freedom and democracy in the country.

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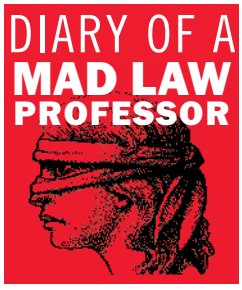
Patricia J. Williams

The Fire Next Time

As we pass from 2010 to the new year, Congress resumes in its conservative-dominated configuration. This new wave is sustained by a right-wing power base informed by ideologues who would eviscerate the Fourteenth Amendment's promise of equality by restricting voting rights and limiting public expenditures on the "parasites" who leech off the welfare of "their" America.

Many of these views, while wrapped in Ayn Rand's individualist "ethical egoism," protect a political and social order based on wealth and impermeable group privilege, one also rooted in a segregationist "us versus them" mentality, albeit persisting well beyond the racial divide. Christians versus others. Natives versus immigrants. English-only speakers versus snooty cosmopolitans. Inherited privilege versus equality as birthright.

Consider these recent salvos: Arizona State Senator Russell Pearce is so concerned about the "hijacking" of the Fourteenth Amendment that he has sponsored a bill that would refuse issuance of state birth certificates to children born here whose parents are not legal citizens. Rand Paul, freshman senator from Kentucky, believes that the Fair Housing Act is wrong because "a free society will abide unofficial, private discrimination, even when that means allowing hate-filled groups to exclude people based on the color of their skin." John Cook, the very public member of the Texas State Republican Executive Committee, wants to replace Republican Joe Straus, who is Jewish, as speaker of the Texas House of Representatives because "We elected a House with Christian, conservative values. We now want a true Christian, conservative running it." And Judson Phillips, head of the Tea Party Nation, has endorsed "the original intent" of restricting voting rights to citizens who are property holders because "if you're a property owner, you actually have a vested stake in the community."



Many policies originally promulgated to maintain economic supremacy by controlling the movement and political force of blacks in the Deep South seem to have come full circle, afflicting not just recent immigrants but poor and middle-class white people. One vivid example is the fate of Gene Cranick, an elderly, wheelchair-bound white resident of Obion County, Tennessee. When a backyard trash fire spread to his house in October, the fire department arrived, only to watch his home burn to the ground because Cranick had not paid a $75 yearly "pay to spray" fee. Cranick had the misfortune to live in an unincorporated area that had the limited services historically associated with black neighborhoods—when fire, sewer and police services would stop at the edge of a town based on the lines of segregation. Richard Kluger's book *Simple Justice* relates how in the 1950s civil rights activist Joseph DeLaine's South Carolina home was apparently targeted by arsonists: "Members of the all-white Summerton fire department were on hand as the wooden house burned to the ground, but they made no effort to put out the flames because DeLaine's house, they said, was beyond the town limits. And it was—by 100 feet." (For those interested in the details of the legal and political battles for the Fourteenth Amendment's promise of equal citizenship, I highly recommend Patricia Sullivan's *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement.*)

Just a few weeks ago, while speaking of his youth in Yazoo City, Mississippi, during the most violent times of the civil rights movement, Governor Haley Barbour became positively misty: "I just don't remember it as being that bad." How bad wasn't it? According to Barbour, the White Citizens' Council heroically ensured school integration and bravely kept the Ku Klux Klan at bay. In fact, the White Citizens' Council set up a system of all-white private academies that left Mississippi's public schools virtually all black and all woefully underfunded. It is true that to some degree the White Citizens' Council often took public stances in opposition to the KKK, yet this professed opposition was not because it was in favor of blacks' civil rights but because Klan violence attracted international attention, which was often "bad for business." So instead the council tended to espouse resistance to integration through economic threats and the isolation of entire communities.

Indeed, Haley's elder brother Jeppie was elected mayor of Yazoo City in 1968 on a platform of economic isolation of any blacks (or whites) who pressed for integration. Willie Morris's 1971 book *Yazoo: Integration in a Deep-Southern Town* details what Jeppie described as blacks' efforts to "get us on our knees so they can tell us what to do." "When I came into office I intended to get some paving and some sewage improvements for the colored," Jeppie said. "But now I can't get too enthusiastic about it." The time might come, Jeppie warned, for the whites to retaliate with firings and other measures.

Recently, *The Huffington Post* ran excerpts from a 1956 article by David Halberstam in which Nick Roberts of the Yazoo City Citizens' Council explained why fifty-one of fifty-three blacks who had signed an integration petition withdrew their names: "If a man works for you, and you believe in something, and that man is working against it and undermining it, why you don't want him working for you—of course you don't." This sort of thinking imagines the collective power of the White Citizens' Council as nothing more than the individual choices of "a man" in dealing with "that man"—both of whom are syntactically equally endowed with options and opportunities. In the aggregate, however, these "preferences" become insidious disguises for a gangsterish mentality by which the endowed "we" eliminates anything but the narrowest sense of community. The rest of the polity, marked as "them," remain alien—all while being chided to pay and pay and pay in order to play. That this creates a controlling class of the economically privileged—to wit, an oligarchy—seems utterly lost on the ground these days. ■

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Eric Alterman

The Coming Class War

According to *Newsweek*'s Jonathan Alter, the president recently told friends, "All I want for Christmas is an opposition I can negotiate with." Well, he had one, briefly, so long as he was willing to cave in to its demands to bust the budget with a massive gift of more than $130 billion in tax cuts to the wealthiest 2 percent of the country and the gutting of the estate tax. That cleared the decks for other "victories" and "compromises" and led to widespread insider approval of Obama's ability to "make the system work." Like 13-year-olds at the movies, pundits love "action," period, never mind its consequences.

It's hardly surprising that few of them noticed that even during this decidedly brief Era of Good Feelings, Republicans refused to fund the government through the end of the fiscal year. Instead, both parties agreed to extend current levels of funding temporarily to avert an immediate government shutdown, with the mutual understanding that the postelection House will be much stingier than the old one. So Obama bought himself some peace in Hawaii, but at the cost of returning home to a metaphorical house on fire.

What is not understood by those who cover contemporary conservatives (and, one fears, by those who negotiate with them) is that while they like to talk about all kinds of values, these are always subordinated to a single, unchanging and uncompromised goal: class warfare.

Think about it. Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush talked incessantly about fiscal responsibility and lost no opportunity to denounce deficit spending, but these principles flew out the window when it came time to cut taxes on the rich. The new bunch are even worse. Incoming House Ways and Means Committee chair Dave Camp recently told George Will that one of the biggest problems with our tax system is that too few poor people pay income tax.

In addition to the tax cuts, but far beneath the radar, Republicans fired another volley in the right-wing class war by refusing to approve funding to continue the Build America Bonds program. These bonds, which make up roughly 20 percent of all new debt sold by states and local governments because of a federal subsidy equivalent to some 35 percent of interest costs, ended on December 31, as Republicans proved unwilling even to consider renewing them. The death of the program could prove devastating to states' future borrowing. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, states face a $140 billion budget shortfall next year; some predict that the figure could rise to as much as $3 trillion over time when one includes unfunded liabilities to pay for retiree benefits.

This serves the purpose of Republican class war in two respects. It forces localities to slash their budgets for services like snow removal and public schooling—a form of transfer payment from the wealthy to the rest of us. But even more, it will eventually force localities to default on their pension obligations, and thereby destroy the credibility of the public unions that negotiated them. Note that they are doing this at a moment when the recovery is imperiled by the loss of public-sector jobs. But forget the recovery; Republicans Devin Nunes, Darrell Issa and Paul Ryan are co-sponsoring a bill to demand that state and local governments recalculate the likely size of their pension obligations in light of the downturn or risk the loss of the right to issue tax-exempt bonds.

Hamtramck, Michigan, recently profiled in the *New York Times*, is the future to which these Republicans look forward. The town already ceased taking care of the trees and grass on public property and ran out of money for street plowing just before the recent blizzard. Localities like Hamtramck are getting little help from the state legislature, however. "All our communities have done is cut, cut, cut," said Summer Hallwood Minnick, director of state affairs for the Michigan Municipal League. "They're down to four-day workweeks and the elimination of parks, senior centers, all of that. So if there's anything else that happens, they will be over the edge."

Ditto Prichard, Alabama, which recently ceased mailing monthly pension checks, in violation of state law. A retired fire marshal died in June and was found without running water or electricity in his house. These are extreme cases, but the danger is widespread. Rare is the locality whose pension obligations are fully funded, and none are dealing with it terribly responsibly. New Jersey, for instance, under Republican hero Governor Chris Christie, simply refused to fork over the $3.1 billion due its pension plan this year. Christie will worry about that tomorrow.

The conservative Reuters columnist James Pethokoukis has helpfully laid out the Republican strategy. By refusing to bail out the states, local governments will be forced to go the route of either Hamtramck or Prichard, cutting services, pensions or both. Republicans may even pursue legislation allowing states to declare bankruptcy and let the unions fight it out in the courts. "From the Republican perspective," Pethokoukis explains, "the fiscal crisis on the state level provides a golden opportunity to defund a key Democratic interest group." Barack Obama, forgetting, once again, which side elected him, chose to reinforce this right-wing narrative by unilaterally—and unnecessarily—freezing the salaries of all federal workers. Once again, it pains me to add, he elicited not a single conservative concession in return. Obama, like so much of Washington, loves to see the deal done and worry about the details later. But with a radical Republican majority coming to power in the House, what America needs right now in the White House, Mr. President, is a fighter, not a referee. ■

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KABUKI DEMOCRACY—AND HOW TO FIX IT

ERIC ALTERMAN

AP PHOTO/J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

It's no secret our democracy does not work well anymore. In many respects, including that particularly large swath of issues that involve someone's monetary profit and someone else's loss, it can barely be said to be a democracy at all—unless one takes the view held by some in Washington and Wall Street that money fulfills the function not only of free speech but of citizenship itself. If America is to ameliorate its current democratic dysfunction anytime soon, merely electing better candidates to Congress is not going to be enough. We need a system that has fairer rules, that diminishes the role of money and that encourages politicians and journalists to investigate and portray the realities they observe honestly, thereby reducing the distorting lenses of finance, ideology and ignorance. And yet these items rarely feature on any progressive agenda.

This is, in many ways, understandable. Ending the Bush/Cheney administration, and defeating the Christian conservative and corporate base on whose behalf it acted, required emergency measures of a largely defensive nature. And the chance to replace George W. Bush with Barack Hussein Obama both for symbolic and pragmatic reasons in 2008 appeared so enticing (and exciting) that we can all be forgiven for losing ourselves in the romance of focusing our time, money and energies on making this man America's forty-fourth president.

But the 2008 election was not a game changer after all. For change of the kind Obama promised and so many progressives imagined, we need to elect politicians willing to challenge the outdated rules of the Senate, fight for publicly financed elections and, in the absence of that, struggle against the Supreme Court's insistence on giving corporations the same free speech rights as individuals. We need smarter organizations that pressure politicians as well as pundits and reporters, not necessarily to see things our way but to hold true to the ideals they profess to represent. We must work to transform our culture to re-ennoble the notion of the "public good."

Some of the challenges standing in our way look to be all but impossible to overcome, like the blatant limitations on democracy inherent within the Electoral College or a Constitution that grants Wyoming and California the same power in the Senate. Others, meanwhile, are maddeningly complex, such as Senate rules regarding cloture and the like. But particularly in light of the 2010 election, apathy is no option. A little imagination and a great deal of hard work and patience can help put us on a path to a more democratic and equitable America. But don't expect it to be easy, and don't be surprised at the resistance of those who profit from politics as usual.

The Broken Senate

Congress has become a place where, most of the time, nothing much happens. Once in a great while, however, because of the political investments of one side or another, a massive piece of transformative legislation grows too big to fail and is somehow rammed through Congress without much concern for the parliamentary niceties that had up until that moment dominated the process. The Obama administration passed weakened versions of healthcare reform and financial regulation in this fashion but failed with cap and trade.

Most voters do not follow politics closely and hence remain largely uninformed about the precise nature of our system's dysfunction. This allows activists who work on specific issues to manipulate the process and shape legislation up to the final vote with hardly anyone paying attention. And although once

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upon a time partisans were satisfied to earn a legislator's nay vote, the new expectation has become to find a way to kill it.

Clearly, the secret hold that allows senators to delay business on any legislation for as long as they like deserves to die. The Senate has attempted to quash this practice. In a standoff that captures the absurdity of this body's method of self-policing, a 2006 bill to expose secret holds was itself the victim of a series of secret holds. To quote Oregon's Ron Wyden from the floor debate, "That pretty much says it all." Eventually, the Senate did pass the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act, which purported to end secret holds and demanded that senators stand by them in public. But, true to form, the act lacked any credible enforcement mechanism. It will likely change nothing.

A more effective tack would be to remove the fiction of proxy holds from the Senate rules. New rules might require any senator who issues an objection on the Senate floor to take public responsibility for the hold by the end of that day's session unless another senator asks to be credited in his stead. This would ensure that any senator listed on a controversial hold could force a colleague to take the heat for it or withdraw the hold. It is hard to imagine that the targets of many recent holds would be able to withstand this test. For instance, the obstructionism of Oklahoma Republican Tom Coburn was finally overcome by a time-consuming series of procedural votes scheduled by Harry Reid and Co. to pass a food safety bill late in the 111th Congress; but it would never have happened without the luxury of a lame-duck Congress.

Bringing holds out into the open would subject them to public accountability and backlash. But the undemocratic ability of a single senator to stop most Senate business would remain. Apart from the unanimous consent procedure, party leaders generally choose to honor holds as evidence of a senator's threat to filibuster (even in cases where it seems obvious that a senator has little intention of making good on the threat). Countering that gridlock requires addressing the filibuster itself. Although rules surrounding filibusters are arcane, effective reform need not be. The key objective must be to preserve the legitimate tactic of reasonable delay by a dedicated minority to provide for more debate, more information and more public awareness about proposals that could soon carry the force of permanent law while preventing purposeful and permanent obstruction of majority rule. For example, the Patriot Act, which sailed through Congress in just four days during the panic after the September 11 attacks, would clearly have been a better law if a group of senators had been able to ensure that its most controversial aspects got a more thoughtful and thorough hearing.

In a surprising development in late December, every returning Senate Democrat signed a letter circulated by Carl Levin of Michigan and Mark Warner of Virginia urging changes in the way the filibuster is conducted. One likely change will be a prohibition on senators attempting a filibuster before a bill reaches the floor, unless they can demonstrate the support of at least forty of their colleagues, and they would have to remain on the floor to sustain it. This would ensure that "filibusters… be conducted by people who actually want to block legislation instead of people being able to quietly say 'I object' and go home," according to Missouri Democrat Claire McCaskill. The changes, which are being spearheaded by the newer members of the Democratic Caucus over the objections of some of their elders, like the retired Chris Dodd of Connecticut, may also include a vote in favor of the proposal put forth by New Mexico Democrat Tom Udall to require a mere majority to change the Senate rules at the beginning of the session, rather than the current need for a two-thirds majority; this vote will occur on January 5, as this article goes to press, at the opening of the 112th session. If the filibuster cannot be avoided, Senator Tom Harkin has proposed a series of measures to ensure that it does not go on forever. He has suggested a gradual approach to grinding down the number of votes required to end a filibuster to a simple majority. An opening vote to "break" a filibuster would still require sixty votes, but a second motion following a forty-eight-hour delay might need only fifty-seven votes, and so on. The number needed would eventually reach fifty-one. Ultimately, the majority would rule, but the minority would retain the opportunity to delay that victory and draw attention to its concerns in the process.

It is not easy to persuade elected officials who are incumbents to reform the system that they have worked so hard to game.

Corporations, United

The reforms for these structural constraints, however, are hindered not only by the structural constraints themselves—like the Kafkaesque secret hold on a bill to ban secret holds—but also by the character of the reform constituency. It's not easy to persuade incumbents to reform the system that they have worked so hard to game. As *Newsweek* columnist Ezra Klein notes, "They've got donor networks, relationships with lobbyists, corporate friends, and activist groups that will help them. Their challengers don't."

What's more, it can be awfully difficult to get media attention for process and precedent. And it's a rather significant challenge to convert the public disgust with Washington and concerns about corporate corruption of politics into informed support for procedural proposals that operate at least one layer apart from policies that affect people's lives. Finally, it is no simple matter to persuade good-government liberals to play the kind of hardball required to win the fights these reforms inevitably involve.

The severity of our political crisis may change some of these dynamics. For example, an unusual alliance of twenty-seven

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Eric Alterman is a Nation *columnist, a senior fellow of the Center for American Progress and the author of several books, including, most recently,* Kabuki Democracy: The System vs. Barack Obama *(Nation Books), from which this article is adapted.* *Copyright © 2011. Ari Melber,* The Nation*'s net movement correspondent, researched and drafted sections of this chapter.*

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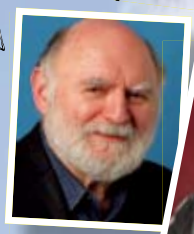
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high-dollar donors went "on strike" for the first time in 2010, pledging to withhold donations from candidates unless they supported a public funding system for Congressional races. "I'd rather have campaign finance reform than access," explained one of the members, Steve Kirsch, a businessman who says he funneled more than $10 million to back Al Gore in 2000. The effort was organized by Change Congress, a group founded in 2008 by political consultant Joe Trippi and activist/legal scholar Lawrence Lessig. So far the numbers have been tiny compared with the flood of private spending that is swamping our system—which is understandable, as this is an awfully risky strategy to pursue when the other side refuses to play along.

This is always the problem with organizing around secondary or "procedural" issues, and it is not an easy one to solve. What some people call "acting on principle" others might just as sensibly deem showing up for a gunfight with an iPad. With this in mind, some low-dollar donors on ActBlue, the largest liberal portal for online campaign contributions, are giving contributions to Democratic candidates who back reform. Blue America, a fundraising network that raised more than $500,000 for liberal candidates, has begun using support for the Fair Elections Now Act as a criterion for its endorsements. Even though public opinion overwhelmingly favors cleaning up Washington, these financial efforts are also crucial for paving an inside track toward reform, albeit slowly, cautiously and with decidedly mixed results.

Perhaps more promising was a strategy unveiled immediately after the 2010 election when a group of twenty-five investors announced the filing of shareholder resolutions at several corporations that sit on the board of the US Chamber of Commerce. The group demanded that these boards review their policies on and oversight of political expenditures, especially through trade associations, given the organization's aggressive and partisan use of its funds during the midterm election as well as its role in helping to defeat Obama's cap-and-trade legislation. The first four companies to receive this resolution are Accenture, IBM, Pepsi and Pfizer, with AT&T, Caremark, Caterpillar, Deere & Company, Dow Chemical, FedEx, JPMorgan Chase, UPS and Xerox soon to follow. Shareholder democracy is one of the most underutilized tools of political advocacy, at least by those on the left, but it has significant potential now that the courts have so weakened the strictures on corporate spending.

It is not so surprising that the problem of Senate reform comes down to the power of the purse, a problem the Supreme Court has greatly exacerbated in recent years with its corporate-friendly rulings in virtually all matters relating to money and speech. The most practical way to combat private financial influence in campaign funding is to reduce it. Yet as long as the Supreme Court continues to equate money with speech and corporations with people, legalized bribery will likely continue to corrupt the system. Absent an awakening on the part of a majority of Supreme Court justices, the only practical avenue to empowering the public interest in these battles is to subsidize campaigns. In this public funding system, candidates agree to cap their spending in exchange for government funding. The cost of campaigning drops, and the amount of money candidates accept from private donors is drastically reduced. And even though participation is voluntary, candidates are often eager to embrace it, given how much more enjoyable, to say nothing of convenient, it would be for them to cash a campaign check for a few million dollars than to endlessly work the phones begging rich folks for money.

Public funding is an elegant remedy to the problem of institutional corruption: instead of accepting legal bribes from donors in exchange for special consideration, candidates receive money from taxpayers in exchange for a pledge to spend less on their campaigns. And it works. Without much fanfare, public funding operated effectively for six consecutive elections, beginning in 1976, when candidates in both parties accepted funds and spending limits. The campaigns were cheaper, and the parties enjoyed relative financial parity. The parties split elections three to three during that period, and challengers beat incumbents in three out of the five races when incumbent presidents ran for re-election.

Public funding is an elegant remedy to institutional corruption: instead of legal bribes, candidates receive money from taxpayers.

One obvious problem with the model is that it leaves one side at a disadvantage if it decides to opt in and the other side does not, as happened to John McCain in 2008. Moreover, even when Congress did pass the moderate McCain-Feingold legislation in 2002 (since decimated by the Supreme Court), it failed to pass the component of the bill designed to rationalize the cost of campaigns: a limit on what broadcast and television stations could charge for campaign commercials. The provision originally passed by the Senate 69 to 31, but it died in the House following furious lobbying by the National Association of Broadcasters and the cable television industry, leaving the United States alone among 146 countries in refusing to provide free television time to candidates. As a result, more money is needed to offset the recent explosion of private funding as well as the rising costs of political campaigns.

But presidential elections are not the main problem. Congress is. And its members have proven quite adept at protecting their prerogatives, particularly when it comes to retaining their jobs. The House and Senate have taken a range of small steps to regulate campaigns in recent years. They agreed to ban companies and unions from directly contributing to candidates, capped the amount that individuals can give, limited the use of "soft money" by the parties and regulated how independent groups spend money on television commercials. Even though these restrictions have had some impact on the margins of a few elections, they are far from the main event. The truth is that even though Congress supports public funding for presidential campaigns, it continues to resist public funding for itself. This is understandable. On Capitol Hill incumbents enjoy a consistent fundraising advantage over their challengers, and they like it that way. As the late Senator

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Robert Byrd declared in 1987, "The need for Congressional campaign financing reform is obvious, but just because it is obvious does not mean that it is easy to attain."

Yet the times may be a-changing, if only for reasons of self-interest. William Cohen, a former Republican senator from Maine, told Charlie Rose in August that he found the pressure put on candidates for Congress by lobbyists to be "obscene," adding, "If the American people saw what legislators go through…[with lobbyists saying] 'Don't forget we supported your campaign,' I think the American public would finally turn against that." This disgust is not confined to former officials and outsiders. Newer, younger members increasingly say the process is miserable and untenable. In a 2010 survey of freshman members, *Politico* found Congressional schedules packed with several hours of fundraising per day. That includes hours of "call time," phone-banking potential donors from the "cramped cubicles" of campaign committee offices that one freshman likened to a "sweatshop."

And it's true at pretty much every level of politics. Indiana Democratic Senator Evan Bayh told *Newsweek* on the eve of his retirement, "It's miserable. It is not uncommon to have a fundraiser for breakfast, for lunch, and for dinner, and if you have spare time in between, you go to an office off Capitol Hill and you dial for dollars. Then the weekend rolls around, and you get on a plane and travel the countryside with a tin cup in your hand. And it gets worse each cycle." What's more, in the most critical cases the majority of the money does not even come from within the states. In Democrat John Kerry's 2008 Massachusetts Senate race, for example, two-thirds of both candidates' contributions were from out of state. Consider the absurdity: wealthy donors who cannot legally vote on the outcome of a local election because the winner will not represent them can wield far more influence at the ATM than at the ballot box. (Tea Party activists who get so exercised about alleged violations of the Constitution by liberal Democrats might take a moment to consider the abrogation of the founders' intent by the blatant practice of people who have no standing as voters buying elections. Then again, we might wait an entire lifetime for such an awakening. In the meantime, plenty remains to be done.)

Again, the clearest path to fixing this mess is voluntary public funding. The Fair Elections Now Act, which had more than 160 co-sponsors in the House and thirty-five in the Senate at the end of the last Congress, would create a public funding system for Congress modeled after the presidential system administered by the Federal Elections Commission. The act would allow candidates to collect $100 donations (or less) from residents of their own states, which would be matched four to one with Fair Elections funds. Fair Elections would be fully funded and would not cost taxpayers anything. This would dramatically reduce spending in a host of races in which outside donors dominate the process. That alone would open elections to candidates unable or unwilling to sell themselves to big funders. Moreover, it would nudge candidates back into the business of actual representation—which was, after all, the founders' original intention when Congress

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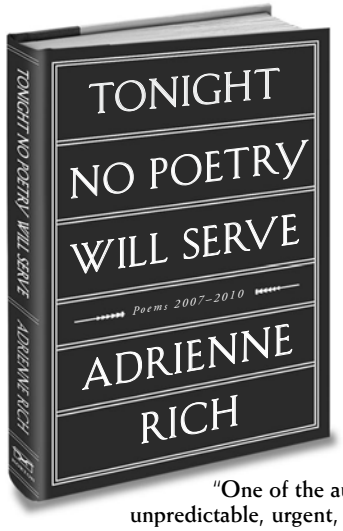

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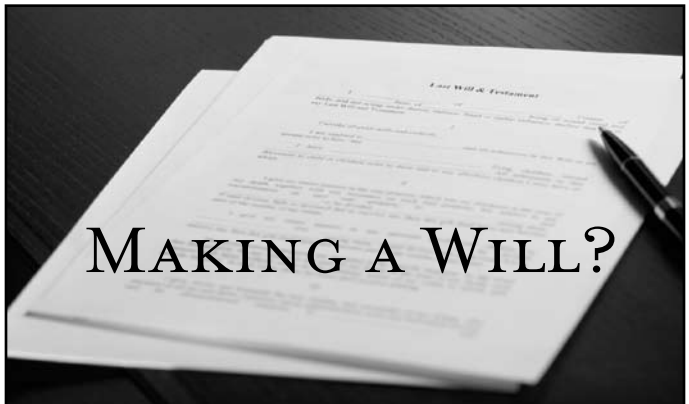

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was created. That the act made it through the Committee on House Administration in late September was a welcome and somewhat surprising development, but it is a long way from a Rose Garden signing ceremony.

A different tack, suggested to me by AFL-CIO president Richard Trumka, would be to accept that corporate campaign spending, defined as free speech by the Supreme Court, is a lost battle and to focus instead on redefining the meaning of the term "corporation." Trumka suggests that those companies that wish to enjoy all the benefits of the law, such as limited liability and privileged tax status, agree not to engage in political agitation. Those that do choose to play politics will continue to have every right to do so but will be forced to forfeit the protections that incorporation implies. This reform is possible because states determine the rules and regulations of the corporations whose charters are located in those states. The obvious problem is that all fifty states would have to act as one because any single state could tie up the entire system. But it is indicative of innovative thinking about what have appeared to be insurmountable obstacles.

A glaring conflict of interest for members of Congress and their staffs is the tempting prospect of quadrupling their salary with a job after government service if they keep these potential employers happy. President Obama kept his campaign pledge and formally banned most lobbyists from working in his administration. That rule acknowledged the revolving door between government and industry, but it stopped people only on the way into government and only within the executive branch. The rule did nothing to address Congress, where the real horse-trading takes place. After all, the problem is less whether lobbyists come to work in government, where pay is lower, hours longer and financial disclosure forms far more onerous, and more whether people leave government to cash in on their connections (and sometimes even to be paid off for services rendered). When the top staffer for the House Banking Committee jumps ship for Goldman Sachs in the middle of a big fight over the regulation of Goldman itself and can do so without violating any federal regulations, old-fashioned bribery becomes unnecessary.

Until 2007 federal law required government officials to wait just one year before taking jobs lobbying their former colleagues. When Congress extended the break to two years and applied the law to a wider circle of Congressional staff and administration officials, it drove one senator into early retirement. Trent Lott of Mississippi, a former Republican majority leader, quit, Sarah Palin–style, before his term was up just to ensure that he could cash in on his old job without bothering to wait an extra year. The new regulation was a start. Yet the goal cannot simply be to inconvenience the future Trent Lotts of the world. It must be to root out the encouragement the system offers to staffers to sell themselves to the highest bidder.

But again, how? We need a lobbying ban to insulate our elected officials and their top staffers from the temptation to sell themselves while doing the people's business and for a few years afterward. In business terms, ex-officials and their staffs need to be forced to protect their trade secrets and lay down robust noncompete clauses. A strong ban on employment with firms doing business under legislation covered by the elected officials and relevant staffers would need to run from eight to twelve years. In 2010 Senator Michael Bennet of Colorado introduced the Closing the Revolving Door Act, which would extend the ban on Congressional staff to six years and proposes a lifetime ban on members of Congress becoming lobbyists after they retire. Passage of this bill, which was referred to the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs and at this writing remains stuck there, would restore some independence to government staffers and lawmakers while reducing the stack of chips corporate lobbyists bring to the legislative poker table. But given the turnover in government, even a break that spanned two or three presidential terms and five to seven Congressional sessions would ensure that public servants who turn to lobbying later in life would be trading on general knowledge of government, which is legitimate, as opposed to exploiting their personal relationships and inside information for the benefit of those who can afford to pay for it.

Voting Rights and Elections

Another item on the long-term reform agenda needs to be the question of democracy itself. American politics, with its anemic participation rates, invites too much influence in our elections for too many undemocratic forces. As the American Enterprise Institute's Norman Ornstein has noted, to counter the oversized power of such minority interests, "in Australia, where failure to show up at the polls (you can vote for 'none of the above') leads to a $15 fine, attendance is over 95 percent—and politicians cater less to consultants and the extremes (since both bases turn out in equal proportions) and more to the small number of persuadable voters who are not swayed by outrageous rhetoric." A few right-wing libertarians might cry "totalitarianism," but most Americans would likely come to see mandatory voting as a reasonable way to ensure that everybody gets a say. After all, nobody's being forced to vote "for" anyone, just to affirm their bona fides as small-d democrats, which is an essential component of citizenship.

The short-term problem with mandatory voting, however, lies not in its demands on individuals but in the inability of municipalities to locate and register voters who are legally entitled to vote and identify those who are not. Australia, as it happens, puts most of the onus to register voters on election authorities. Australian election officials gather information from government agencies to identify unregistered eligible voters and mail them the requisite voting materials. In this respect Australia is not unusual; the United States is. For example, according to one survey of sixteen nations and four Canadian provinces, only four place the onus of voter registration entirely on the individual, as the United States does, which helps account for this country's anemic rates of political participation. The same goes for our unwillingness to allow people to vote on a weekend or a holiday, when they are not forced to miss work or to wait on line for hours merely to exercise their constitutional right to pick their leaders. (It is as if some politicians do not want people, particularly hourly wage workers, to be able to vote.)

As a step from here to there, the Brennan Center for Legal

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Justice has proposed a program to modernize voter registration practices that, if properly implemented, could increase the number of US voters by as many as 65 million. The plan would remove the onus of registration from citizens and place it on state governments, which would relieve election officials of the burden of last-minute registration and remove the need for third-party registration drives. By bringing the registration system into the twenty-first century, the plan would eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic processes, save states money, free precious resources for election officials and simplify the process for voters. It would make such registration automatic and permanent, bringing all eligible unregistered voters onto the rolls and keeping them there if they move. This is particularly important for members of the military and their families, students and, of course, the millions of victims of the foreclosure crisis, many of whom lack a permanent address. Some states have begun to adopt aspects of this program, but making it part of the progressive agenda would likely do wonders for a host of related priorities, particularly given the unrestrained spending by corporations and other interested parties in the wake of *Citizens United*.

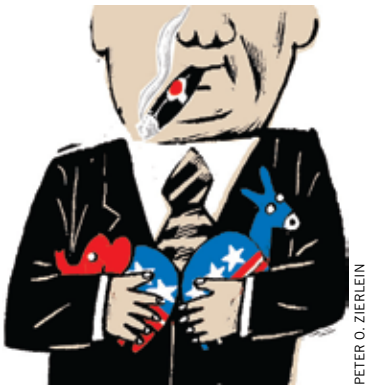
A final item on this agenda for expanded and improved democracy needs to be the extension of the right to vote to ex-felons. Millions of Americans have had their right to vote revoked for periods ranging from the time spent incarcerated to a lifetime. In fourteen states a person can lose the right to vote for life. This is morally indefensible. In the United States the right to vote is not contingent on good behavior any more than it is on race, religion or ethnicity. And the idea that even after one has paid one's proverbial "debt to society," one must continue to pay with one's right to vote makes no moral or political sense. Most of these laws are rooted in the Jim Crow era and were intended to bar minorities from voting; many continue to operate that way, with black and Latino voters, particularly men, discouraged or prevented from voting in numbers well beyond their proportion in the population. What's more, as in the case of Florida in 2000, confusion regarding differing state felony disenfranchisement laws can easily result in eligible voters, sometimes even those with no disqualifying criminal conviction, being purged from the rolls or denied the ability to register to vote or cast their ballots. The provisions of the Democracy Restoration Act, introduced in Congress in July 2009 by Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold and Michigan Representative John Conyers, would restore voting rights in federal elections to nearly 4 million Americans who have been released from prison and are living in the community, and would ensure that people on probation would not lose their right to vote. As a matter of fairness and strategy, this bill deserves the energetic support of all liberals and progressives.

Throughout our history, a more democratic America has consistently helped create a more progressive America, and these steps taken in support of improving democracy will likely help offset more reactionary developments in our political environment. ■

The End of New Deal Liberalism

by WILLIAM GREIDER

We have reached a pivotal moment in government and politics, and it feels like the last, groaning spasms of New Deal liberalism. When the party of activist government, faced with an epic crisis, will not use government's extensive powers to reverse the economic disorders and heal deepening social deterioration, then it must be the end of the line for the governing ideology inherited from Roosevelt, Truman and Johnson.



PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Political events of the past two years have delivered a more profound and devastating message: American democracy has been conclusively conquered by American capitalism. Government has been disabled or captured by the formidable powers of private enterprise and concentrated wealth. Self-governing rights that representative democracy conferred on citizens are now usurped by the overbearing demands of corporate and financial interests. Collectively, the corporate sector has its arms around both political parties, the financing of political careers, the production of the policy agendas and propaganda of influential think tanks, and control of most major media.

What the capitalist system wants is more—more wealth, more freedom to do whatever it wishes. This has always been its instinct, unless government intervened to stop it. The objective now is to destroy any remaining forms of government interference, except of course for business subsidies and protections. Many elected representatives are implicitly enlisted in the cause.

A lot of Americans seem to know this; at least they sense that the structural reality of government and politics is not on their side. When the choice comes down to society or capitalism, society regularly loses. First attention is devoted to the economic priorities of the largest, most powerful institutions of business and finance. The bias comes naturally to Republicans, the party of money and private enterprise, but on the big structural questions business-first also defines Democrats, formerly the party of working people. Despite partisan rhetoric, the two parties are more alike than they acknowledge.

In these terms, the administration of Barack Obama has been a crushing disappointment for those of us who hoped he would

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be different. It turns out Obama is a more conventional and limited politician than advertised, more right-of-center than his soaring rhetoric suggested. Most Congressional Democrats, likewise, proved weak and incoherent, unreliable defenders of their supposed values or most loyal constituencies. They call it pragmatism. I call it surrender.

Obama's maladroit tax compromise with Republicans was more destructive than creative. He acceded to the trickle-down doctrine of regressive taxation and skipped lightly over the fact that he was contributing further to stark injustices. Ordinary Americans will again be made to pay, one way or another, for the damage others did to society. Obama agrees that this is offensive but argues, This is politics, get over it. His brand of realism teaches people to disregard what he says. Look instead at what he does.

With overwhelming majorities in Congress and economic crisis tearing up the country in 2009, incumbent Democrats opted for self-protection first, party principles later. Their Senate leaders allowed naysayers to determine the lowest common denominator for reform—halfway measures designed not to overly disturb powerful corporate-financial interests, and therefore not able to repair the social destruction those interests had wrought. Senate Democrats say they didn't have the votes. Imagine what Mitch McConnell would have done if he were their leader: Take no prisoners. Force party dissenters to get in line and punish those who don't. Block even the most pedestrian opposition proposals.

There is no limit to what capitalism will seek in terms of power and profit. If government does not apply the brakes, society is defenseless.

Democrats are not used to governing aggressively. They haven't done so for decades, and they may no longer believe in it. For many years, incumbent Democrats survived by managing a precarious straddle between the forces of organized money and the disorganized people they claim to represent. The split was usually lopsided in favor of the money guys, but one could believe that the reform spirit would come alive once they were back in power with a Democratic president. That wishful assumption is now defunct.

Obama's timid economic strategy can be described as successful only if the standard of success is robust corporate profits, rising stock prices and the notorious year-end bonuses of Wall Street. Again and again, Obama hesitated to take the bolder steps that would have made differences in social conditions. Now it is clear that the bleeding afflictions experienced by the overwhelming majority of citizens will not be substantively addressed because Democrats, both president and Congress, have chosen to collaborate in the conservative cause of deficit reduction: cut spending, shrink government, block any healing initiatives that cost real money.

Republicans, armed with strong conviction, are resurgent with what amounts to ideological nihilism. Leave aside their obvious hypocrisies on fiscal rectitude and free markets. Their single-minded objective is to destroy what remains of government's capacity to intervene in or restrain the private sector on behalf of the common welfare. Many of government's old tools and programs are already gone, gutted by deregulation, crippled by corporate capture of the regulatory agencies originally intended to curb private-sector abuses and starved by inadequate funding. The right wants smaller government for the people, but not for corporate capitalism. It will fight to preserve the protections, privileges and subsidies that flow to the private sector.

Once again, Republicans are mounting an assault on liberalism's crown jewel, Social Security, only this time they might succeed, because the Democratic president is collaborating with them. The deficit hysteria aimed at Social Security is fraudulent (as Obama's own experts acknowledge), but the president has already gravely weakened the program's solvency with his payroll-tax holiday, which undercuts financing for future benefits. Obama promises the gimmick won't be repeated, but if employment is still weak a year from now, he may well cave. The GOP will accuse him of damaging the economy by approving a "tax increase" on all workers. Senate Democrats are preparing their own proposal to cut Social Security as a counter to the GOP's extreme version. In the end, they can split the difference and celebrate another great compromise.

This is capitulation posing as moderation. Obama has set himself up to make many more "compromises" in the coming months; each time, he will doubtless use the left as a convenient foil. Disparaging "purist" liberals is his way of assuring so-called independents that he stood up to the allegedly far-out demands of his own electoral base. This is a ludicrous ploy, given the weakness of the left. It cynically assumes ordinary people not engaged in politics are too dim to grasp what he's doing. I suspect Obama is mistaken. I asked an old friend what she makes of the current mess in Washington. "Whatever the issue, the rich guys win," she responded. Lots of people understand this—it is the essence of the country's historic predicament.

To get a rough glimpse of what the corporate state looks like, study the Federal Reserve's list of banking, finance and business firms that received the $3.3 trillion the central bank dispensed in low-interest loans during the financial crisis (this valuable information is revealed only because reform legislators like Senator Bernie Sanders fought for disclosure). If you were not on the list of recipients, you know your place in this new order.

The power shift did not start with Obama, but his tenure confirms and completes it. The corporates began their systematic drive to dismantle liberal governance back in the 1970s, and the Democratic Party was soon trying to appease them, its retreat whipped along by Ronald Reagan's popular appeal and top-down tax cutting. So long as Democrats were out of power, they could continue to stand up for liberal objectives and assail the destructive behavior of business and finance (though their rhetoric was more consistent than their voting record). Once back in control of government, they lowered their voices and

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sued for peace. Beholden to corporate America for campaign contributions, the Democrats cut deals with banks and businesses and usually gave them what they demanded, so corporate interests would not veto progressive legislation.

Obama has been distinctively candid about this. He admires the "savvy businessmen" atop the pinnacle of corporate power. He seeks "partnership" with them. The old economic conflicts, like labor versus capital, are regarded as passé by the "new Democrats" now governing. The business of America is business. Government should act as steward and servant, not master.

This deferential attitude is reflected in all of Obama's major reform legislation, not to mention in the people he brought into government. In the financial rescue, Obama, like George W. Bush before him, funneled billions to the troubled bankers without demanding any public obligations in return. On healthcare, he cut deals with insurance and drug companies and played cute by allowing the public option, which would have provided real competition to healthcare monopolists, to be killed. On financial reform, Obama's Treasury lieutenants and a majority of the Congressional Dems killed off the most important measures, which would have cut Wall Street megabanks down to tolerable size.

Society faces dreadful prospects and profound transformation. When both parties are aligned with corporate power, who will stand up for the people? Who will protect them from the insatiable appetites of capitalist enterprise and help them get through the hard passage ahead? One thing we know for sure from history: there is no natural limit to what capitalism will seek in terms of power and profit. If government does not stand up and apply the brakes, society is defenseless.

Strangely enough, this new reality brings us back to the future, posing fundamental questions about the relationship between capitalism and democracy that citizens and reformers asked 100 years ago. Only this time, the nation is no longer an ascendant economic power. It faces hard adjustments as general prosperity recedes and the broad middle class that labor and liberalism helped create is breaking apart.

My bleak analysis is not the end of the story. Change is hard to visualize now, given the awesome power of the status quo and the collapse of once-trusted political institutions. But change will come, for better or worse. One key dynamic of the twentieth century was the long-running contest for dominance between democracy and capitalism. The balance of power shifted back and forth several times, driven by two basic forces that neither corporate lobbyists nor timid politicians could control: the calamitous events that disrupted the social order, such as war and depression, and the power of citizens mobilized in reaction to those events. In those terms, both political parties are still highly vulnerable—as twentieth-century history repeatedly demonstrated, society cannot survive the burdens of an unfettered corporate order.

People are given different ideological labels, but Americans are not as opposed to "big government" as facile generalizations suggest. On many issues, there is overwhelming consensus that media and pundits ignore (check the polls, if you doubt this). Americans of all ages will fight to defend social protections—Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, among others. People are skeptical to hostile about the excessive power of corporations. People want government to be more aggressive in many areas—like sending some of the financial malefactors to prison.

One vivid example was the angry citizen at a town hall meeting who shouted at his Congressman: "Keep your government hands off my Medicare!" I heard a grassroots leader on the radio explain that basically the Tea Party people "want government that works for them." Don't we all? In the next few years, both parties will try to define this sentiment. If they adhere to the corporate agenda, they are bound to get in trouble, and the ranks of insurgent citizens will grow. Nobody can know where popular rebellion might lead, right or left, but my own stubborn optimism hangs by that thread.

Whatever people on the left may call themselves, they have a special burden in this situation because they are deeply committed to the idea that government should be the trustworthy agent of the many, not the powerful few. Many of us believe further (as the socialists taught) that the economy should serve the people, not the other way around.

The current crisis requires people to go back to their roots and re-examine their convictions—now that they can no longer count automatically on the helping hand of government or the Democratic Party. Obama's unfortunate "hostage" metaphor led *Saturday Night Live* to joke that the president was himself experiencing the "Stockholm syndrome"—identifying with his conservative captors. Many progressive groups, including organized labor, suffer a similar dependency. They will not be able to think clearly about the future of the country until they get greater distance from the Democratic Party.

I suggest three steps for progressives to recover an influential role in politics. First, develop a guerrilla sensibility that recognizes the weakness of the left. There's no need to resign from electoral politics, but dedicated lefties should stake out a role of principled resistance. In the 1960s uncompromising right-wingers became known as "ankle biters" in Republican ranks, insisting on what were considered impossible goals and opposing moderate and liberal party leaders, sometimes with hopeless candidates. They spent twenty years in the wilderness but built a cadre of activists whose convictions eventually gained power.

Where are the left-wing ankle biters who might change the Democratic Party? It takes a bit of arrogance to imagine that your activities can change the country, but, paradoxically, it also requires a sense of humility. Above all, it forces people to ask themselves what they truly believe the country needs—and then stand up for those convictions any way they can. Concretely, that may lead someone to run for city council or US senator. Or field principled opponents to challenge feckless Democrats in primaries (that's what the Tea Party did to Republicans, with impressive results). Or activist agitators may simply reach out to young people and recruit kindred spirits for righteous work that requires long-term commitment.

Second, people of liberal persuasion should "go back to school" and learn the new economic realities. In my experience, many on the left do not really understand the internal dynamics

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of capitalism—why it is productive, why it does so much damage (many assumed government and politicians would do the hard thinking for them). We need a fundamental re-examination of capitalism and the relationship between the state and the private sphere. This will not be done by business-financed think tanks. We have to do it for ourselves.

A century ago the populist rebellion organized farmer cooperatives, started dozens of newspapers and sent out lecturers to spread the word. Socialists and the labor movement did much the same. Modern Americans cannot depend on the Democratic Party or philanthropy to sponsor small-d democracy. We have to do it. But we have resources and modern tools—including the Internet—those earlier insurgents lacked.

The New Deal order broke down for good reasons—the economic system changed, and government did not adjust to new realities or challenge the counterattack from the right in the 1970s. The structure of economic life has changed again—most dramatically by globalization—yet the government and political parties are largely clueless about how to deal with the destruction of manufacturing and the loss of millions of jobs. Government itself has been weakened in the process, but politicians are too intimidated to talk about restoring its powers. The public expresses another broad consensus on the need to confront "free trade" and change it in the national interest—another instance of public opinion not seeming to count, since it opposes the corporate agenda.

Reformers today face conditions similar to what the Populists and Progressives faced: monopoly capitalism, a labor movement suppressed with government's direct assistance, Wall Street's "money trust" on top, the corporate state feeding off government while ignoring immoral social conditions. The working class, meanwhile, is regaining its identity, as millions are being dispossessed of middle-class status while millions of others struggle at the bottom. Working people are poised to become the new center of a reinvigorated democracy, though it is not clear at this stage whether they will side with the left or the right. Understanding all these forces can lead to the new governing agenda society desperately needs.

Finally, left-liberals need to start listening and learning—talking up close to ordinary Americans, including people who are not obvious allies. We should look for viable connections with those who are alienated and unorganized, maybe even ideologically hostile. The Tea Party crowd got one big thing right: the political divide is not Republicans against Democrats but governing elites against the people. A similar division exists within business and banking, where the real hostages are the smaller, community-scale firms imperiled by the big boys getting the gravy from Washington. We have more in common with small-business owners and Tea Party insurgents than the top-down commentary suggests.

Somewhere in all these activities, people can find fulfilling purpose again and gradually build a new politics. Don't wait for Barack Obama to send instructions. And don't count on necessarily making much difference, at least not right away. The music in democracy starts with people who take themselves seriously. They first discover they have changed themselves, then decide they can change others. ■

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A Former CIA Asset Goes on Trial

Cuban exile Luis Posada has a long record of terror, but he's being tried on lesser charges.

by PETER KORNBLUH

On January 10 one of the most dangerous terrorists in recent history will go on trial in a small courtroom in El Paso, Texas. This is not the venue the Obama administration has finally selected to prosecute the perpetrators of 9/11; it is where the reputed godfather of Cuban exile violence, Luis Posada Carriles, may finally face a modicum of accountability for his many crimes.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

In the annals of modern justice, the Posada trial stands out as one of the most bizarre and disreputable of legal proceedings. The man identified by US intelligence reports as a mastermind of the midair destruction of a Cuban airliner—all seventy-three people on board were killed when the plane plunged into the sea off the coast of Barbados on October 6, 1976—and who publicly bragged about being behind a series of hotel bombings in Havana that killed an Italian businessman, Fabio Di Celmo, is being prosecuted for perjury and fraud, not murder and mayhem. The handling of his case during the Bush years became an international embarrassment and reflected poorly on the willingness and/or abilities of the Justice Department to prosecute crimes of terror when that terrorist was once an agent and ally of America. For the Obama administration, the verdict will carry significant implications for US credibility in the fight against terrorism, as well as for the future of US-Cuban relations.

Posada's trial gets under way almost six years after he brazenly appeared in Miami and announced that he would seek political asylum in the United States. Here was a fugitive from justice in Venezuela—Posada escaped from prison there in 1985 while on trial for the plane bombing—who had been imprisoned in Panama from November 2000 to August 2004 for trying to assassinate Fidel Castro with more than 200 pounds of dynamite and C-4 explosives. Despite an outstanding Interpol warrant for his arrest, for two months the Bush administration permitted him to flaunt his presence in Miami, where he is still considered a heroic figure in the hardline anti-Castro exile community. Confident of his welcome, Posada even filed an application to become a naturalized US citizen. Only after the media turned their attention to the hypocrisy of a White House that claimed to be leading a war on international terrorism while allowing a wanted terrorist to flit freely around Florida did agents from the Department of Homeland Security finally detain Posada, on May 17, 2005.

Initially Posada was incarcerated in El Paso for illegal entry into the United States. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) went through the motions of trying to deport him, but no country would take him. At the same time, the United States refused to extradite him to the one country that had a legitimate claim to him—Venezuela. Only after the immigration court decided to release him on bail did ICE officially identify him as a terrorist: Posada's "long history of criminal activity and violence in which innocent civilians were killed," ICE wrote, meant that his "release from detention would pose a danger to both the community and the national security of the United States" [see Kornbluh, "Test on Terrorism," Oct. 16, 2006].

To its credit, the Justice Department did quietly empanel a grand jury in New Jersey to weigh an official indictment of Posada for masterminding the hotel bombings in Havana. (Evidence gathered by the FBI indicates that Posada raised funds for that operation from Cuban-American benefactors in Union City, New Jersey.) In April 2006 government lawyers decided to hold a naturalization interview with Posada while he was in jail, surreptitiously gathering self-incriminating evidence against him in the hotel bombing case.

But, for reasons that remain under seal, the New Jersey grand jury proceedings stalled. Initially, as a senior State Department official confided, prosecutors were unable to secure a key piece of evidence—the tape recordings of an interview Posada had given to then–*New York Times* stringer Ann Louise Bardach in 1998, in which he appeared to take full responsibility for the hotel bombings. "The Italian was in the wrong place at the wrong time, but I sleep like a baby," Posada proclaimed, according to his statements published in the *Times*. Under subpoena, Bardach turned over the tapes to the grand jury on December 15, 2006. But no indictment was ever handed down.

Instead, on January 11, 2007, Posada was indicted in El Paso on six counts of making "false statements" and one of fraud about how he came to the United States and for his use of false names and false passports—charges that carry an maximum sentence of five to ten years each. To make matters worse for the credibility of the US legal system, four months later Judge Kathleen Cardone dismissed all charges against Posada. The government, she ruled, had engaged in "fraud, deceit and trickery" in obtaining evidence against Posada under the guise of conducting a naturalization review. The court, she declared, could "not set aside [Posada's legal] rights nor overlook Government misconduct [just] because Defendant is a political hot potato."

Peter Kornbluh directs the Cuba Documentation Project at the National Security Archive and is the co-author of a forthcoming book on the untold history of dialogue between the United States and Cuba.

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A free man, Posada took up residence in Miami. Since he is on the government's no-fly list, Posada was forced to drive back to Florida, where he has lived openly for the past several years, attending right-wing exile fundraisers and even participating in public protests against Castro's Cuba.

But in August 2008 the US Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit overruled Cardone's decision and ordered Posada to proceed to trial. In another positive turn of events in this long, twisted legal saga, in April 2009 the new Obama Justice Department used the *New York Times* tapes of Posada's interview with Bardach to file several additional counts of perjury and fraud relating specifically to lying about "soliciting other individuals to carry out…[the hotel] bombings in Cuba." To be sure, Posada is still not being charged with actually perpetrating those terrorist operations, only with lying about aspects of his involvement in orchestrating them. But for the first time in a US court, a team of lawyers from the Justice Department's Counterterrorism Division will present concrete evidence to prove that Posada was indeed behind a series of terrorist attacks on Cuban soil.

Obtaining a conviction will not be easy. Posada will turn 83 on February 15; he suffers from a variety of physical ailments and does not fit the image of a "terrorist alien," as government records describe him. Posada's lawyers have charged that the key evidence against him—the Bardach tapes—contain unexplained gaps and erasures. Bardach, who will be called as a witness to authenticate the tapes, has publicly decried their use in the trial as a government violation of freedom of the press and an assault on the rights of the Fourth Estate.

Moreover, in a pretrial ruling, Judge Cardone denied a Justice Department motion to "exclude all testimony, evidence, questioning and argument concerning defendant's relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency." Posada's past agency associations were "irrelevant to the charges," prosecutors submitted in court filings; introducing his CIA connection in court would "divert the jury's attention away from the basic charges in the indictment." But the judge ruled that Posada could offer the existence of his relationship with the CIA "to show his state of mind" when he allegedly made false statements to authorities—as long as he used only unclassified information.

The government has introduced into the court record an "Unclassified Summary of the CIA's Relationship with Luis Clemente Posada Carriles," which states that he first joined the agency as part of its Bay of Pigs operation in 1961. "Posada was a paid asset of the CIA from 1965 to 1967," when he left the United States to set up operations in Caracas as an intelligence official of the Venezuelan secret police, DISIP, "and again from 1968 to 1974," states the summary. "From 1974 to 1976, CIA had intermittent contact with Posada." The document reveals that in 1993, when Posada was an escaped fugitive wanted by Interpol for the Cuban airplane bombing, the agency intercepted intelligence on an assassination plot against him and surreptitiously "contacted him in Honduras by telephone to warn him about a threat to his life."

CIA documents, obtained and posted by my organization, the National Security Archive, show that in the mid-1960s Posada worked at a salary of $350 a month as an instructor in sabotage and demolition for the CIA's Maritime Training Section. The declassified records, which identify Posada using his CIA cryptonym, AMCLEVE/15, also reveal his work as an active snitch on other violent Cuban exile groups. "I will give the Company all the intelligence that I can collect," Posada promised his CIA handlers in 1966. "A/15 is dedicated to the overthrow of Castro," his "Company" supervisor Grover Lythcott noted in one secret report on Posada, but he "is not a typical 'boom and bang' type of individual. He is acutely aware of the international implications of ill planned or over enthusiastic activities against Cuba." In an observation that proved to be wholly inaccurate, Lythcott noted that Posada would "discourage activities which would be embarrassing to WOLADY"—the CIA's codeword for the United States.

The danger of terrorism relating to Cuba has emanated not from Cuban territory but from the shores of the United States.

Ironically, it is now the legal proceedings against Posada that could be embarrassing to, and carry significant implications for, WOLADY. In the six years Posada has been in the United States, his case has become a spectacle around the world. Now, if he is found guilty and in effect proven to be a mastermind of terrorism, the US government will have to address the scandalously short sentence the perjury charges carry. If he is found innocent and released, the Obama administration will have to confront the fact that the US legal system is inadequate to hold Posada even minimally accountable for his violent crimes, and that the United States is, in the end, harboring an international terrorist.

For Havana, where officials routinely refer to Posada as "the Osama bin Laden of Latin America," the case remains a particular sore point in US-Cuba relations. The Cubans have readily assisted the Justice Department by welcoming teams of FBI agents and US prosecutors, turning over more than 1,500 pages of documents as evidence from the hotel bombings and making Posada's alleged accomplices in Cuba available for depositions. But even as the US government allowed Posada to live freely in Miami, it has kept Cuba on its terrorism list because, the State Department claims, Cuba has not done enough to support the international effort against terrorism. To add insult to injury, in the wake of the Christmas 2009 terrorist attempt aboard a Detroit-bound plane, the Obama administration put Cuba on the list of fourteen countries, including Iran and Syria, whose citizens receive extra security screenings when traveling to the States—escalating tensions between Havana and Washington to their highest level since Obama took office.

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As the Posada case illustrates anew, the danger of terrorism relating to Cuba has emanated not from Cuban territory but from the shores of the United States. Just five years ago, Posada's ally and benefactor, Santiago Álvarez, was busted in Miami by the FBI for illegally accumulating a warehouse of war-grade armaments, presumably for use against the island. Indeed, the Cubans are incensed by the contrast between how the US legal system has treated Posada and the severe treatment meted out to five Cuban counterterrorism agents sent to the United States in the mid-1990s as part of *La Red Avispa* (Wasp Network)—an espionage operation to gather intelligence on the activities of Posada's supporters and other violent exile groups in Florida. (It was Cuban agents spying on exile groups who ferreted out information that led to Posada's November 2000 arrest in Panama for the attempted assassination of Castro.) The so-called Cuban Five—Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González and René González—were arrested in 1998, thrown into solitary confinement, prosecuted on maximum charges of conspiracy and even homicide, and given sentences from fifteen years to life. A court has reduced the sentences of two of them, but the Cuban government continues to make their release a top priority in communications with the Obama administration.

A guilty verdict in the Posada case, and a determination by the Justice Department and the Department of Homeland Security that Posada should be imprisoned indefinitely as a perpetrator of terrorism, could still contribute to conditions for better US-Cuban relations. As the trial starts, however, the last word on its significance belongs to Posada's victims. "He is not being charged as a terrorist but rather as a liar," says Livio Di Celmo, whose brother, Fabio, was killed in one of the hotel bombings in Cuba. "My family and I are outraged and disappointed that a known terrorist, Luis Posada, is going to trial for perjury and immigration fraud, not for the horrific crime of masterminding the bombing of a civilian airliner," Roseanne Nenninger, whose 19-year-old brother, Raymond, was aboard the Cuban plane, told *The Nation*. "Our hope is that the US government will designate Posada as a terrorist and hold him accountable for the pain, suffering and loss he has caused to us and so many other families." ■

Exchange

(continued from page 2)

Altschuler Replies

Amherst, Mass.

Movements are, by their nature, complex creatures. As people organize, it can be relatively easy to find agreement on what they are against. It is more difficult to craft consensus on what they support and which compromises they can accept. So I welcome Roberto Lovato's comments and fully acknowledge the recent tensions among immigrant rights activists and advocates on matters of legislative strategy and how to respond to current enforcement policies. And while the limited length of my piece may not have permitted a full treatment of these divisions, I have explored strategic debates within the movement elsewhere and will continue to probe further in subsequent pieces.

But the core of Lovato's comment concerns issues of representation and the Beltway–grassroots divide. Here, I think he oversimplifies. First, a clarification: although my article quoted only two leaders of national, DC-based organizations, it was based on interviews with leaders from national and grassroots groups across the country. The quotations expressed ideas broached by many with whom I spoke.

Second, and more important, the organizations and coalitions I referred to have unquestionably been the central actors pushing for immigration reform over the past few years. The Reform Immigration for America (RIFA) campaign has been joined by more than 800 organizations in its push for CIR (reformimmigrationforamerica.org/blog/about/organizations). Through this network, RIFA recently delivered nearly 200,000 contacts to Congress in four days to support the DREAM Act. (Incidentally, while RIFA groups have received a great deal of foundation support, I have not seen conclusive evidence of "more than $100 million.")

Moreover, certain "DC groups" to which Lovato refers engage continuously with grassroots organizations. Take the Center for Community Change: far from just being a Beltway insider, CCC participates in the movement through its Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM) network, which consists of more than 200 organizations nationwide (full disclosure: in 2008, I consulted for CCC on an unrelated project). FIRM's approach is shaped by a two-way dialogue between national leaders (themselves experienced community organizers) and groups like the Coalition for Human Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles, the New York Immigration Coalition, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, and CASA de Maryland. FIRM has worked not only on CIR and the DREAM Act but also on campaigns against punitive enforcement measures and for better state legislation. And, contrary to Lovato's assertion, FIRM and affiliated groups have been mobilizing in response to Obama's enforcement policies since his first year in office. Not all of the national groups under the RIFA tent share this structure, but to say that the DC groups have imposed their agenda misses this give-and-take and the vibrancy of the debates that have taken place within these networks.

Finally, Lovato suggests that the groups pursuing CIR have conceded too much. My article mentioned the unsettled debates about legislative strategy; whether other strategies over the past two years would have borne more fruit is certainly an open question. But without compromise, legislative victories are unattainable. The recent campaign for the DREAM Act is illustrative. Lovato has rightly railed against the "securitization" of the immigration issue. But even people he has worked with accepted that it was essential to keep military service as part of the DREAM package, and that the bill be introduced in September as part of a Defense Department bill. Given the country's conservatism on this issue, DREAM activists were aware that overcoming a filibuster might require accepting additional enforcement provisions as the price of citizenship for roughly 1 million undocumented youths.

Advocates and activists will continue pushing back against draconian enforcement policies and the likely restrictionist surge to come. But, to paraphrase Saul Alinsky, they will achieve little progress—particularly in the legislative arena—if they mistake the world as it should be for the world as it is.

Daniel Altschuler

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Books & the Arts.

Trakt Marks

by ELAINE BLAIR

IAN FRAZIER

Whale jawbones at an old Eskimo village site, Chukotka

The armies of Napoleon and Hitler had some well-known problems in the winter cold of Russia. The Soviet government, in its own way, also ran aground because of it. Stalin and his successors built factories, mines and cities in Siberia, across a forbidding territory where previously there had been only towns and small settlements. The Soviet industrial projects in Siberia had a certain kind of economic logic when the government was arresting its own citizens and forcing them to work there, but once the gulag system was scaled back, an old truth reasserted itself: not very many people want to live in Siberia. The Soviets had to spend a lot of money enticing workers to move east of the Ural Mountains, especially to the Russian Far East, and still more money supplying them with fuel and food shipped from western Russia. The numbers never worked out, but the government kept trying anyway until the Soviet Empire fell apart, at which point Siberia was left with many surprisingly large cities in improbably cold places, scattered inconveniently across a vast territory, connected by a few poorly maintained roads and, with factories and military bases closing, fewer jobs than before.

At about this time, in the early 1990s, Ian Frazier made his first trip to Russia, including a stop in the Siberian city of Ulan-Ude. "In my adult life," he writes in *Travels in Siberia*, "no trip had ever made such a change in me." This is saying a lot, since Frazier had already traveled a great deal, mostly in the United States and especially the American West, and written about some of his travels in *Great Plains* (1989). "I couldn't get over where I'd been and what I'd seen.... I began to read all kinds of books about Russia.... I started putting notes about Siberia in folders."

Elaine Blair is the author of Literary St. Petersburg. *Her writing has appeared in* The New York Review of Books *and other publications.*

In at least one sense, Siberia *is* Russia: in terms of land mass, it makes up 77 percent of the Russian federation. Frazier lists some of its improbable measurements (eight time zones, one-twelfth of all the land on earth, big enough to contain the United States and most of Europe), but his book is, among other things, about reckoning with the hugeness of Siberia apart from numbers and statistics. In 12999 he returned to Siberia, to the town of Chukotka, in the extreme northeast of Russia, where he and a small group of Americans spent a week at a fishermen's village. Then he decided that what he needed to do was not simply to fly in and out of Siberia but to cross it.

Frazier rejected the more common means of trans-Siberian tourist travel, the railway, because he wanted to see more of Siberia up close than the train would allow. With two Russian guides, Sergei Lunev and Volodya Chumak, he spent five weeks and two days in the summer of 2001 driving from St. Petersburg to the Pacific Coast town of Olga, not far from Vladivostok, camping outdoors on most nights and stopping at various points of interest he had read about along the way.

Travels in Siberia
By Ian Frazier.
Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 529 pp. $30.

One thing he saw up close is the lack of a real national highway system in much of Russia—provincial roads, especially in Siberia, can be potholed and unpredictable, liable to start winding through tiny villages or stop at an unexpected dead end.

Another thing he saw was the mechanical genius possessed by some Russians. On the second day of the trip, Frazier's van breaks down. Sergei and Volodya get it running again, but the van continues to conk out periodically all the way across Siberia. For a while Frazier is infuriated that Sergei chose such a sickly vehicle for a 9,000-mile journey, but eventually he achieves a certain tranquillity regarding the van. No matter what part of it breaks, Sergei and Volodya are able to fix it. When Frazier asks Volodya, well into their trip, "just what was the matter with this car," Volodya thinks about it and tells him that "what was wrong with the car could not be said in words," which makes Frazier think of a famous stanza by the Russian Slavophile

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poet Fyodor Tyutchev that begins, "Russia cannot be understood by the mind."

Our narrator's love for Russia is serious, but his position is comic, thrust as he is into various Russian situations that he can only negotiate imperfectly. Frazier studies Russian and bravely makes as much use of it as possible. He savors the few times he is able to make Russians laugh (intentionally!) while speaking their language. A sensible and apparently well-behaved American, he insists that the van be fitted with seat belts; he asks his guides not to drive more than fifty-five miles per hour and admits to his periodic anxiety over other matters of personal safety. He admires the beauty of Russian women but stays in his tent on nights when his guides (both married) party with women from the towns they visit. Sergei, Frazier's chief guide, is the head of a robotics lab at the St. Petersburg State Polytechnical University who does guiding for extra money. Volodya is a building renovator. They are all roughly the same age. Sergei and Volodya seem to view Frazier's requests as harmlessly eccentric, and they indulge some while quietly disregarding others.

Frazier has written other books of hard-to-classify nonfiction, including *Great Plains* and *On the Rez* (2000), in which he goes to places that interest him, talks to people there, reads relevant books of history and literature and describes it all in a careful, plainspoken, arresting way. In *Travels in Siberia* he is perhaps even more understated than in the others; by saying relatively little but saying it just the right way, he conveys the wonder of a scene without much editorial comment—the literary equivalent of an actor holding still for a long, deadpan pause in response to someone else's extraordinary outburst.

Frazier doesn't spell out what makes him fall in love with Russia, but he gives a sense of the initial swoon. He recalls lying down on his host's son's bed the first day in Moscow, his mind already spinning with impressions from the airport, the drive into central Moscow and dinner with his hosts. He stares at a paper airplane hanging from the bedroom chandelier:

> This paper airplane had sharp angles, and fins, and a strange projectile sleekness, like the elegant arrowhead-shaped MiG fighter jet. No one in America would have made such a paper airplane.

Frazier's Russia is filled with things that you would not see in America—subtle things that don't necessarily lend themselves to broad theories about cultural differences between the two countries but are distinctly Russian nonetheless.

On his first trip, Frazier and his friends visit the town of Barguzin, near Lake Baikal, and stop at the Barguzin museum and historical society. Barguzin was home to many distinguished political exiles in the nineteenth century, so one might imagine that the museum would be filled with various artifacts related to the exiles, or to some other periods in the town's history. Frazier discovers that the museum, which is curated and run by a married couple, consists entirely of pictures made out of animal fur.

> Vladimir, a sturdy man with blue eyes and a forward-thrusting, chestnut-colored beard, had made the pictures, mostly landscapes, which he had assembled by cutting and stitching various Siberian animals' pelts. Some of the pelts he had obtained himself in the wild. Lizaveta [his wife] led us around the gallery from picture to picture and explained how different kinds of fur represented different landscape shades; the deep blue-gray of the fur of the Baikal seal, for example, duplicated the color of Lake Baikal in a storm.

Vladimir goes fishing with Frazier, then he and his wife have the travelers over to dinner at their house. Frazier marvels at Vladimir's handmade fishing lures, Lizaveta's homemade jam, their elaborate, carefully tended fruit and vegetable garden. The Soviet Union was not generally known for the craftsmanship of its goods, but its citizens nonetheless put a great deal of ingenuity and care into things they made, and they knew how to build a great deal from scratch. In fact, Frazier observes admiringly that "somehow everything built in Russia looks as if it has been made by hand. Even in the most generic industrial structures, the concrete looks hand poured, the corners as if shaped, sometimes clumsily, by individual hands." Ornament appears where you don't expect it. In a hotel in Severobaikalsk that was originally built as a residence for railroad workers, each room has a light fixture embellished with "leaflike metalwork, scrolled tracery, and small cascades of faceted glass lusters." On the facade of a gulag prison barrack, Frazier spies "a very small swirl of scrollwork.... The embellishment was so out of place it caught the eye. I wondered what carpenter or designer had thought to put a touch of decoration on such a building."

Preparing for his trips, Frazier read travel narratives written by some of the many Americans who visited Russia around the turn of the twentieth century. Siberia was a popular destination for adventurous travelers, many of whom were trying out the newly finished Trans-Siberian railroad. Whether it was the closing of the American frontier that drew them to the Wild East, or some similarity of landscape between the American plains and the Siberian steppe, a disproportionate number of these travelers were from the Midwest. Frazier, also a Midwesterner, is "at least the seventh person from Ohio to travel in and write about Siberia." One of his heroes is another Ohioan, the explorer and writer George Kennan (a forebear of the twentieth-century Russia expert George F. Kennan). Kennan was working as a telegraph operator when Western Union sent him to survey land in Siberia for a possible network of telegraph cables that would link the United States and Western Europe. He ended up writing a much-read book about his travels across Siberia, and after another trip to Siberia in the 1880s he wrote a second book about the inhumane treatment of Russian political exiles in Siberia. Kennan's writing about the exiles was read by Tolstoy (he noted in his journal the "terrible indignation and horror" stirred by Kennan's descriptions) and Chekhov, who then decided to make his own trip to Siberia to see the prisoners.

Having read Kennan, Frazier hoped to see the beginning of "the great Siberian road," or the Sibirskii Trakt, which Kennan saw in 1885. The highway spanned 3,000 miles between Ekaterinburg, just east of the Urals, and the Amur River in the Far East. The Trakt was used for trade (it was thick with tea caravans when Kennan saw it) and also for the deportation of exiles, who typically walked, sometimes in chains, most of the way to their final Siberian destination. Kennan describes a "grief-consecrated pillar" that marked the border between western Russia and Siberia, where "exiles were allowed to stop and make a last goodbye, to press their faces to the ground and pick up a little of the earth of western Russia to bring with them."

Frazier and his guides were not able to find this pillar, but they did find long stretches of the original Trakt, which having been superseded long ago by a newer road had eroded to a pair of muddy ruts that "dwindled eastward to the horizon and forever." Though some European Russians have gone to Siberia voluntarily, for adventure or money or science, the emotional resonance of "going east" in Russian culture is overwhelmingly melan-

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choly. Even before the exile system began in the seventeenth century, Frazier writes, the east had a dark association for European Russians: Mongol armies came from the east to conquer Muscovy. They sent Russian prisoners eastward to join the Mongol army or harems. Supplicant Russian noblemen had to cross Asia to visit the khan. Frazier speculates that perhaps "the reason that no Russian tsar (until Alexander II) ever ventured east of the Urals, and that the tsars instead used Siberia as a place to send their enemies, was that they still had a historic memory passed down from medieval Russia of those cross-continental visits to the Great Khan."

Both the czars and the Soviets found prison slave labor useful, but of course the Soviets employed it on a grand scale: 28.7 million forced laborers (by Anne Applebaum's count in *Gulag: A History*), a majority of them working in Siberia. Frazier is keen to see gulags and prisons, while his guides gently or sometimes very firmly discourage him—presumably because of the danger of going near still-active prisons but also, it seems, because of their discomfort with the subject. When Frazier finally gets to see an abandoned gulag barracks, on one of his later trips, the building is eerily well preserved by Arctic temperatures but unmarked by any kind of explanatory plaque—and this despite the Russians' love for historical museums. "I thought this camp, and all the others along this road, needed large historical markers in front of them, with names and dates and details; and there should be ongoing archaeology here, and areas roped off, and painstaking excavation, and well-informed docents in heated kiosks giving talks for visitors." Instead, though his guide had described it as a gulag museum, the barracks are deserted and silent.

Though something like 70 percent of Siberians live in cities, thanks in large part to the laborers of the gulag system, "urban" doesn't seem the most salient term for the land Frazier describes: between cities the tracts of land are so vast, and the cities and towns and villages can be so complicated to get in and out of, and the summer mosquitoes and winter cold so prohibitive, that the land seems in some fundamental way untamed despite its impressively urbanized population. It turns out that it is not actually possible to drive across Siberia, at least not in a reasonable amount of time. In the town of Chernyshevsk, the road becomes so poor that it is essentially impassable. Cars and trucks have to be loaded on train cars and hauled by rail to the town of Magdagachi. Frazier and company are relatively lucky. Having waited only about thirty hours in a queue to board the train (in a town with "almost no lodgings, no bathroom facilities you would want to enter without protective gear, and almost no restaurants"), they and their van get a place in a long windowless train car that they share with three other vehicles and their passengers. The train car is sealed tight; there is almost no light or fresh air; and the vehicles, parked only inches apart, take up almost all the space in the train cars. The passengers have to sit and sleep in their cars for most of the daylong journey. This is a low point in the trip. But when they get to Magdagachi, the end is more or less in sight: the Pacific is less than a week's worth of driving and camping away.

Like Siberia itself, Frazier's book seems simply to drift off into the distance.

As you're reading the first half of *Travels in Siberia*, it seems that the book will end when the trans-Siberian drive ends—that this will be a story about getting from one end of Siberia to the other. But the book is bigger and more complicated. Some time after he returns from the cross-country drive, Frazier becomes troubled by the fact that he still hasn't seen most of Siberia in winter. He enlists Sergei again and they travel together from Vladivostok to Yakutsk. They drive the ice highway across frozen Lake Baikal, they have a lunch of reindeer meat and reindeer broth at a native Even village, they see a gulag camp. "At what point can you say you have traveled in Siberia enough? I had done most of what I wanted to do there. But I kept wondering and thinking about this question, and I decided that if I was thinking about it so much, probably I should go." Frazier goes back again in 2009, this time to the city of Novosibirsk. It's his first trip without a Russian guide or friends to accompany him.

It's in Novosibirsk that Frazier has the peculiar experience of feeling "normal" for the first time on any of his visits to Russia. He takes a day trip to Akademgorodok, a part of Novosibirsk built in the 1950s as a residential neighborhood for scientists at the local university. Akademgorodok was prestigious in the Soviet era because of its academic community, and it remains so today, but its fortunes have taken a particularly Western turn. A scientist who lives in Akademgorodok tells Frazier that real estate prices have shot up as newly affluent Novosibirsk residents (presumably the beneficiaries of the oil and gas boom) are drawn to the neighborhood's cachet, threatening to price out the middle-class academics. Frazier and the scientist have lunch in a stylish local restaurant with a science theme, its zinc walls decorated with "elaborate scientific formulas in Russian handwriting." The restaurant, like Akademgorodok, seems to have an air of cheerful—but not ill-gotten—prosperity, and Frazier is surprised to find himself talking about a subject as mundane as rising real estate prices. On previous trips, especially those shortly after the fall of the Soviet Union, he felt both "dazzled and on my guard constantly." In 2009, enough predictability had returned to some corners of Russia that for at least one afternoon in one Siberian town, it was possible for one American to relax. That evening, after returning to his hotel in downtown Novosibirsk and taking "another solitary hike or two around the city, my feeling of normalness faded out, and I fell into a jumpy state again. I decided I kind of preferred it, overall."

But that novel feeling of normalcy, or familiarity, serves as a kind of ending for a book that does not conclude in any conventional way. Novosibirsk is the last Siberia trip Frazier writes about in the book, but it seems entirely possible that he might go back again. There is nothing that feels particularly final about this visit, nor has he apparently exhausted his interest in the place. The end of the book must necessarily be somewhat arbitrary, and Frazier does all he can to efface the idea of an ending—like Siberia itself, the book seems simply to drift off into the distance, ending with a quote from a Decembrist revolutionary who died midsentence while writing his memoirs. In his last chapter Frazier mentions many things that he still hasn't seen in Siberia, among them American oilfield workers and climate scientists, two kinds of people of great importance right now not only to Siberia but to the rest of the world. Assessing Russia in 2009, Frazier ticks off a list of contradictions. Life expectancy: terrible. Energy exports: bountiful. Freedom of speech? No. Russian oil billionaire buying the New Jersey Nets? Yes. Is Russia's power waxing or waning? Will things get better or worse for ordinary Russians? It's not at all clear. One can live long enough to finish a memoir about a decade of travel in Siberia but still be far from reaching any conclusions about Russia. ■

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A Secret Archive

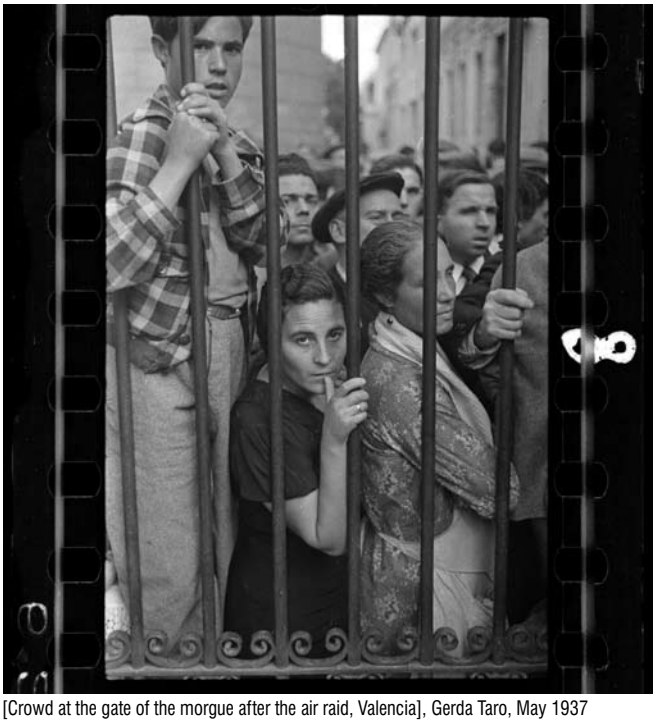
by DAN KAUFMAN

In the spring of 1942, Gen. Francisco Aguilar González, the Mexican ambassador to the Vichy government, left France to return to Mexico with his wife, Maria. The couple traveled through newly Fascist Spain to Lisbon, where she boarded a steamer bound for New York, with twenty trunks of their belongings, while the general made his way back across Spain, through France and then to London, eventually flying to New York for their rendezvous. In New York they boarded a passenger train with their belongings and traveled across the United States and Mexico before finally arriving at their home in Mexico City. Tucked away in one of the trunks and kept hidden for nearly seventy years were three small cardboard boxes given to Aguilar for safekeeping. They contained an archive of 4,500 negatives of photographs of the Spanish Civil War taken by three extraordinary photojournalists: Robert Capa, Gerda Taro and David Seymour (known as Chim).

Though Capa's negatives had been missing for decades, rumors that a cache of them had been secreted away persisted. In 1979 Capa's brother, Cornell, the founder of the International Center for Photography (ICP), in New York City, began a search for the lost images. He published an appeal in a well-known photography journal, and over time he managed to recover a number of lost works by Capa, Chim and Taro—but not the fabled negatives. They remained in Mexico, passing from Aguilar to his daughter, who gave them to her cousin, a filmmaker named Benjamin Tarver. In 1995, at an exhibition of Spanish Civil War photography in Mexico City, Tarver told the curator, a Queens College professor named Jerald Green, that he possessed images of similar scenes, which he believed were taken by Capa. Green relayed the information to curators at the ICP, but letters to the mysterious Tarver went unanswered, and the tantalizing lead vanished. In 2007, on behalf of the ICP, Trisha Ziff, a Mexico City–based documentary filmmaker, established contact with Tarver, and he agreed to meet her at a coffee shop. At a subsequent meeting he showed her three contact sheets with stunning images of Republican soldiers in battle and a woman dressed in black walking alongside a tank on a snowy battlefield. Ziff soon realized that these were the long lost negatives that Cornell Capa, who would die less than a year later, had been trying to locate. What had come to be called the Mexican Suitcase had finally been found.

The negatives in the Suitcase span the duration of the war, beginning with Chim's foreboding photographs of marching Republican dignitaries in April 1936, three months before the conflict broke out, and ending with Capa's stark portraits of Republican refugees in concentration camps in Southern France in March 1939. The distribution of the negatives among the photographers divides the war roughly into thirds, with Chim's coverage heaviest at the beginning, Taro's in the middle and Capa's toward the end. A small number of the negatives correspond to previously published works—the Suitcase contains a famous 1936 photograph by Chim of a woman breastfeeding a baby at a rally for land reform—but the vast majority have never been seen by the public. A selection of the negatives is on display at the ICP through May 8. All 4,500 images, including a few touching shots of Capa and Taro in a Parisian cafe by a fourth photographer, the German-Jewish exile Fred Stein, are reproduced in an exemplary two-volume exhibition catalog published by the museum.

In an introductory essay to the catalog, the ICP's chief curator, Brian Wallis, writes, "With their dramatic coverage of the Spanish Civil War, Robert Capa, Gerda Taro, and Chim invented modern war photography." Remarkable as that achievement is, the newly discovered negatives do more than deepen our understanding of the origins of photojournalism or flesh out the biographies of three photographers, all of whom were killed on assignment. (Taro was crushed by a tank in Spain in 1937, Capa stepped on a land mine in Indochina in 1954 and Chim was shot by an Egyptian sniper days after the end of the Suez War in 1956.) The images convey the war's complexities and offer a visual counternarrative to the revisionist view that the Republic was a monolithic Soviet satellite. Some photographs feature female soldiers and pro-Republican clergy. Others depict fleeing refugees, Communist generals, volunteers from the International Brigades, portraits of Federico García Lorca and La Pasionaria, and Republican guards protecting artistic treasures that belonged to the Francoist duke of Alba. Taken together, the images in the Mexican Suitcase portray a besieged country's fight for its survival and its soul amid a Nazi-backed Fascist revolt. "The culture of the Spanish Republic," Ziff said recently from her home in Mexico City, "was preserved in the Suitcase."



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[Crowd at the gate of the morgue after the air raid, Valencia], Gerda Taro, May 1937

Chim, a Polish Jew whose given name was Dawid Szymin, was the most established of the three photographers. In 1932 he relocated to Paris from Leipzig, where he had been studying graphic arts, to pursue a degree in chemistry and physics at the Sorbonne. Amid rising anti-Semitism in Poland his father's Yiddish

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publishing business struggled, and Chim was forced to work in order to continue his studies. He picked up a camera and began shooting street photography, focusing on portraits of the working class and unemployed of Paris. Within a year he was selling photos to *Regards*, which billed itself as "the illustrated newspaper of the Popular Front," and later to *Ce Soir*, a Communist evening paper edited by the poet Louis Aragon. By all accounts Chim was a gentle, quiet man. Henri Cartier-Bresson, who later founded the Magnum photo agency with Chim and Capa, described him as "a philosopher, a chess player." Perhaps it was this equipoise that enabled Chim to photograph unexpected moments of tranquillity amid chaos.

Several of Chim's essays open a pictorial window onto still-contentious aspects of the war.

A 1937 series of two boys playing in the ruins of Gijón after its destruction by Fascist bombers and naval artillery is one of the many revelations of the lost negatives.

Before the discovery of the Mexican Suitcase, Chim's work in Spain was little known. He began covering the Republic in the spring of 1936, when *Regards* sent him to photograph the aftermath of the electoral victory by the center-left Popular Front coalition. Even then, with little experience as a photographer, Chim quickly mastered the captioned photographic essay, a narrative format favored by immensely popular new photo journals like *Regards*, *Life* and the British *Picture Post*. These essays typically featured some half-dozen photographs in an artful layout and told a story mainly with images. Often, Chim appeared to shoot with this format in mind: narrative sequences are found throughout his rolls. Besides their formal achievement, several of Chim's essays open a pictorial window onto still-contentious aspects of the war.

In October 1936 Chim shot four rolls of film of Moroccan prisoners held by Republicans in a Madrid barracks. The pictures (none of which were published) show the prisoners eating, smoking cigarettes offered by Republican guards and smiling and laughing with their captors. Though the images showcase the Republic's humane treatment of its captives, Chim's extremely sympathetic portrayal of the Moroccans, especially a series of tender close-ups of three men in the final roll, is still surprising, given the reputation they earned for brutality. To augment the nearly 100,000 professional soldiers sent by Hitler and Mussolini to aid his revolt, Franco relied heavily on the Moroccans. They were his shock troops, dying at a rate of 1,000 a month in the long siege of Madrid. As the military historian Antony Beevor noted, they were also called on to inflict terror on the population. In Seville, in July 1936, Antonio Bahamonde, the press officer for the Fascist Gen. Queipo de Llano, an architect of the revolt, described watching the Moroccans throwing grenades into the windows of small houses in working-class neighborhoods, indiscriminately killing women and children. "The Moors took the opportunity to loot and rape at will," he added. "Queipo de Llano, in his night-time talks…urged on his troops to rape women."

Though the Moroccans, or Regulares Indigenas, held no particular allegiance to Fascism, they were desperately poor and easily recruited; the promise of a regular salary and food was especially enticing because the conflict in Spain followed a severe famine and drought in Morocco. "They took us as if we were cows. We knew nothing," one veteran recalled in *The Moroccan Labyrinth*, a recent Spanish documentary about the Regulares. Another characterized his enlistment this way: "When you are hungry, you can't see." The Fascists further induced them by presenting their cause in religious terms, as a jihad against a godless enemy.

While most of the clergy in Catholic Spain also cast the war in religious terms, and overwhelmingly sided with the Fascists (the Primate of Spain, Cardinal Isidro Gomá, claimed the Republic was "controlled by the Semite International"), the Basque clerics, who shared their compatriots' desire for greater autonomy, were a notable exception. In January 1937, in the Amorebieta Cloister, southeast of Bilbao, Chim shot a remarkable series showing Basque monks opening their refuge to Republican soldiers. The series includes several images of daily life inside the cloister: a monk conferring pleasantly with four Republican militiamen in the courtyard, soldiers setting up a radio transmitter and practicing formations and, most beautiful, a solitary monk studying a book in a small room with sunlight flooding through the window.

Chim's work photographing the Basque clergy's peaceful existence within the Republic was meant to counter the widespread belief that the government was inherently anticlerical. In the early months of the war, irregular militias killed several thousand clergy in the Republican zone (though few of these killings occurred in the Basque region). The Republican executions were a brutal and indiscriminate response to the church's centuries-long alliance with the monarchy, its close fraternity with the estate owners in Spain's semifeudal agricultural system and its fierce opposition to constitutional efforts to limit its power and role in civil society. These extrajudicial killings, however, contravened the government's policy and were publicly condemned by the Socialist leader Indalecio Prieto. Republican President Manuel Azaña and Prime Minister José Giral reorganized the judicial system, establishing popular tribunals in an effort to stop the killings. By October 1936, they had subsided.

The church hierarchy's unequivocal support for the Fascist rebellion was articulated in a pastoral letter written by the Bishop of Salamanca and published in September 1936. The letter described Franco's adversaries as "sons of Cain" and the civil war as a "crusade in defense of religion, the Fatherland, and Christian civilization." A year later, in response to the Nazi bombing of Guernica, which killed and wounded thousands of civilians and shocked many Catholics, Cardinal Gomá released an open letter to bishops around the world intended to shore up any wavering of Catholic support for Franco. The letter, signed by two cardinals, six archbishops and thirty-five bishops, characterized the Fascist revolt as the only recourse for "maintaining order and peace."

Soon after Chim photographed the Amorebieta Cloister, he traveled to a remote mountainous area near the Basque village of Lekeitio and shot an even more confounding scene: a Basque priest saying an elaborate Mass to several dozen Republican soldiers before they went off to fight. Chim photographed the scene from four different angles, but the most arresting image, published prominently in *Regards*, is photographed from above. The camera looks down on a priest behind a makeshift altar leading Republican Catholic soldiers though the sacrament with a pastoral setting as his backdrop.

Despite mitigating factors like Azaña and Giral's efforts and the loyalty of the Basque Catholics to the Republic, let alone the question of whether the destruction of cities like Guernica by aerial bombardment was justifiable to "maintain peace" in Catholic theology, the Vatican staunchly supported the Fascist insurgency. In August 1937 Rome accepted Franco's diplomatic emissary, granting the

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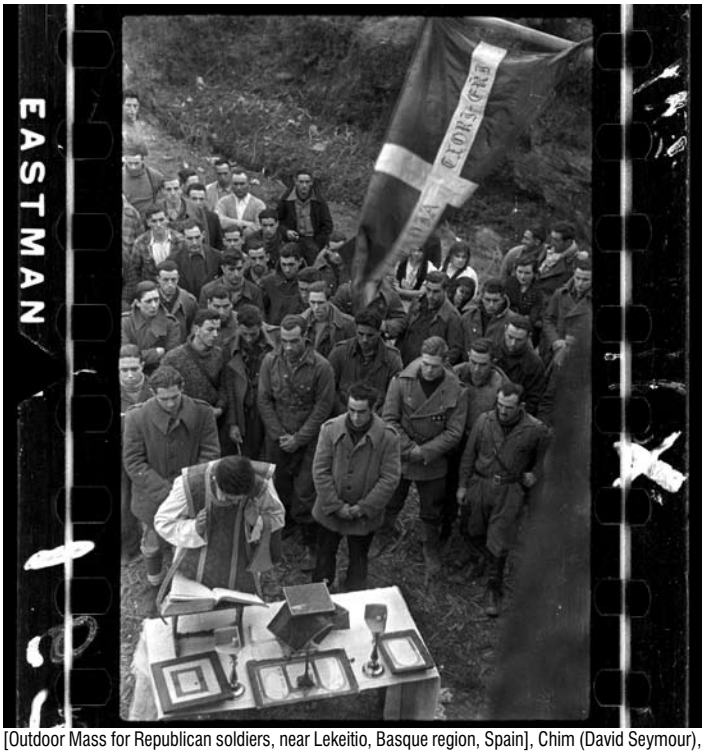
insurgency de facto recognition. Following the Republic's defeat, Pope Pius XII, who was later accused of remaining silent while millions of European Jews were deported to Auschwitz and other extermination camps, gave a radio address describing his "immense joy" with the Fascist triumph.

While the Pope's radio address emphasized the Republican killing of Catholic clergy, he failed to note a different crime against the church. In October 1936 Fascist forces executed by firing squad sixteen Basque priests. The Pope's address also made no mention of the 500 Basque clergy driven into exile by Franco and his accomplices. For them, the loyalty of the Basque Catholics was an international embarrassment that needed to be punished severely. Neither the Vatican nor the Spanish clerical establishment publicly condemned the murder of the Basque priests.

Remarkably, that silence continues today. Three years ago, Pope Benedict beatified 498 priests, nuns and other religious Catholics killed during the civil war, but none of the Basque priests were among them. As *El País* and the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory, a Spanish human rights group, have documented, the list included clergy who were openly supportive of the Fascist uprising and in some cases aided it.



[Outdoor Mass for Republican soldiers, near Lekeitio, Basque region, Spain], Chim (David Seymour), January–February 1937

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The photos by Gerda Taro in the Suitcase reveal a passionate, fearless photographer whose wide-ranging coverage—trench warfare, peasants harvesting wheat, an international writers conference in Valencia—gives a sweeping picture of life inside the Republic. Taro, whose given name was Gerta Pohorylle, and was the daughter of Polish Jews, fled her native Germany in 1933, after being arrested during a Nazi raid. She moved to Paris, a refuge for many Eastern European émigrés; she met Capa in the fall of the following year, and the two fell in love. During a summer holiday in the South of France, with Capa's encouragement and tutelage, she began shooting photographs. When the pair returned to Paris they shared an apartment and formed a loose-knit creative partnership. Taro, who also worked as an editor at a photo agency, acted as Capa's manager, and the two developed various projects for collaboration.

Their most ambitious, and last, would be covering the civil war. Capa and Taro first traveled to Spain in August 1936, as freelancers without an assignment (Taro had yet to be published). Their appearance in the Suitcase begins picking up in February 1937, with a detailed look at the Republican defense of Madrid. Taro focused on the neighborhood around the university, and her attention to granular details—sandbag barricades, men positioning themselves in makeshift trenches—conveys both the anxiousness of the moment and the city's bleak ambience. (She also captured a surreal image of a large brown bear sitting above a trench as two Republican soldiers talk obliviously.) At the beginning of her brief professional career her work was often uncredited. Later, she and Capa shared a credit, and three months before she died Taro began using only her name for some assignments. Mainly for this reason it has been difficult to determine the authorship of some of her works, but by piecing together her travel itinerary, among other clues, Taro scholars and ICP curators have done a painstaking job of establishing her contribution.

Shortly after photographing the university district, Capa and Taro photographed a nearby area newly decimated by German and Italian bombers. Taro's images of what had been a densely populated neighborhood include a young woman collecting firewood among the rubble and two horses grazing in a street of ruins. Mainly her photos show the effects of the bombings on the faltering buildings. Three months later, in Valencia, Taro photographed the human casualties of Fascist air raids. She begins with a small crowd of desperate faces pressed up against the metal gate of the city morgue. She then moves inside the morgue and, in images that evoke Goya, lays bare the human face of saturation bombing: a middle-aged man, his head and face bleeding, lies unattended on a marble slab; a child lies on the floor, her summer dress splattered with blood; and most haunting, a man lies on the floor, partly covered in a blood-soaked white sheet, with a yearning expression frozen on his face.

The war's fateful role as a precursor to World War II is vividly captured in Taro's account of the Valencia morgue. It was confirmed during the Nuremberg trials when Hermann Göring, the Reich commissioner for aviation, testified that he urged Hitler to give Franco military support partly "to test my young Luftwaffe at this opportunity in this or that technical respect." Göring's "technical" experiments would take the form of the first use of carpet-bombing on civilian populations. The Fascists targeted dense cities like Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia in order to inflict the maximum amount of terror and civilian casualties. That the Nazis were simply preparing themselves for the next war was something lost on few. The headline in *Regards* over Taro's Valencia pictures read "General Rehearsal for Total War."

Two months later, covering the Battle of Brunete, outside Madrid, Taro was run over by an out-of-control Republican tank in a chaotic retreat. She died hours later. Her spare, elegant tombstone, designed by Alberto Giacometti, read "Gerda Taro, 1911 [sic]–1937, photojournalist for *Ce Soir*, killed July 25, 1937 on the Brunete front, Spain, in the line of duty." In 1942, during the Nazi occupation, the inscription was replaced with a concrete block noting only her name and date of birth and death. She was the first female photojournalist to die on assignment.

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In the exhibition catalog, Brian Wallis describes the controversy over Robert Capa's most iconic photograph of the Spanish Civil War, *Falling Soldier*, as the primary motive behind the search for the lost negatives. The picture shows a solitary Republican soldier at the moment of getting shot and falling to his death on a hillside. Since the 1970s a fierce debate has raged as to whether the picture was staged. "It was in an effort to answer such charges—or at least understand that photograph more fully—that Capa scholar Richard Whelan and I set out in 2006 to try to find the picture's missing negative," Wallis writes. The curators did not find the lost negative to *Falling Soldier* in the Suitcase, but breathtaking images of Catalan orphans, the battles of Teruel and Ebro and especially of the Spanish exiles in concentration camps in France suggest that the emphasis placed by Capa's defenders and accusers alike on a single image's provenance has overshadowed the groundbreaking and courageous aspects of his work.

Capa left Spain in July 1937, shortly before Taro's death. Heartbroken by the loss, he returned in late December, covering the battle of Teruel, a last-ditch Republican counteroffensive that briefly recaptured this provincial capital from Franco. The many rolls of film devoted to the battle show Ernest Hemingway smoking with Republican officers, a group of soldiers on a stairwell of a bombed-out building and two old women, one with a cane, dressed in black and walking arm in arm along a mountain pass. There is a photo of a dead Republican watchman in a tree, apparently electrocuted and caught among wires and branches fifteen feet in the air. Capa took the picture from a low angle, a favorite position of his, against an open expanse of sky. His compassion is most palpable in his widely published portrait of a man with an extinguished cigarette in his mouth, carrying his son, whose leg is wrapped in a bloodstained white cloth, to safety.

Among the images in the Teruel rolls are many pictures of Republican refugees, who appear frequently in all three photographers' work, from the beginning of the war until the end. All three seemed to have a special feeling for them, but Capa's pictures of the refugees are more frequent and profound. When he was 17, Capa was briefly arrested and beaten by the Hungarian secret police for his leftist activities. Two months later he fled Hungary and settled for a short time in Berlin. While there, he took to photography as a way to try to make a living. After the Reichstag fire he fled again, eventually settling in Paris. Like Chim and Taro, Capa changed his name (he was born Endre Friedmann) partly to conceal his émigré past.

In the beginning of 1939, with the Republic's defeat inevitable, thousands of Republican exiles, fearing Franco's retribution, began fleeing the country. Most of them traveled to France, where they were interned in concentration camps near the Spanish border. Remedios Oliva Berenguer, now 92, was 20 when she left her home outside Barcelona with her family. "We left at 11 PM and got to Figueres at 6 PM," she said recently from her home in France.

> There were bombers overhead and the road was full, full, full with people, with cars, with animals. We didn't want to leave because the bomber planes were overhead. There was also a castle in Figueres, and it was being bombed nonstop.... We didn't want to go to France. We wanted to go to the countryside, to stay with farmers in the Spanish countryside.... Trucks came for the women and children, but the trucks would arrive already full. People were so afraid they would jump on the trucks anyway and just hang from the sides. We crossed into France on February 7. It was about 6 PM that day. We all slept in the truck. We woke up the following day. We were about twenty-five kilometers from the border. It was sunny. The road was filled with people, filled with police, and they stopped us. We couldn't go through. There was nothing there for us at the Argelès camp. No bathrooms, nothing. They did not expect us. Nothing was prepared, no planning. We then saw a truck arrive with bread. People just flocked to it. There was no organization. So they just tossed the bread out like we were dogs. They threw it on the ground and we picked it up. Then other trucks came with rolls of barbed wire, and we didn't know why. We were thousands standing about, thousands. In the beginning, at the Argelès camp, there were about 75,000 of us. It was just the sand and sea. We were at the edge of the sea. So they constructed a barbed-wire fence along the side of the road to pen us in. The fences were at least two meters high. We knew we were among the first to arrive, but by the end we knew we numbered at least half a million people.

In March 1939 Capa journeyed to Argelès-sur-Mer, the camp where Oliva Berenguer and her family were interned, to document the fate of the exiles. His negatives show refugees living in threadbare tents under the open sky and men crouched on the ground eating meager rations. At the nearby camp at Le Barcarès, Capa photographed several men trapped behind a barbed-wire fence speaking to a passer-by on the other side. Later, he shifts his attention to a dozen men lying on the ground, huddled together for warmth near the camp's outer fence.

Shortly before the outbreak of World War II the male prisoners were allowed to leave the camps to join the Foreign Legion or enlist in work brigades. Still others escaped. During the war, thousands of Republican exiles continued their fight, with the French Resistance and the Free French Forces. In all, an estimated 15,000 Spanish exiles died at the camps in France and 10,000 more died after they were deported from France to Mauthausen and other Nazi camps. As the civil war scholar Paul Preston notes, Franco encouraged Hitler to deport the Republican refugees to the German camps.

A significant percentage of the refugees emigrated to Mexico, the only country besides the Soviet Union to aid the Republic. During the war the Mexican government, though poor, sent arms to Spain as well as food and other humanitarian aid. "It's not for no reason that the Suitcase was in Mexico," Ziff told me. After Franco's victory, Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas agreed to accept an unlimited number of refugees provided their transport and accommodation were paid for. Republican relief organizations worked together with Mexican officials to bring them. Some 25,000 Spanish exiles eventually resettled in Mexico, their presence, like the negatives, preserving a fragment of the Spanish Republic.

After describing her journey, Oliva Berenguer recalled some of those who weren't fortunate enough to make it to Mexico or survive the French camps. "There were mass graves filled with people who disappeared from the countryside," she told me. "We had a neighbor who stayed behind in Spain. We later learned what happened to this man. He was about 58 years old and was a poet and a worker. He had a poet's soul. Of course he was a Republican. His sons had left to fight. I think he lost two or three sons. And he was executed in the Montjuïc castle in Barcelona. He was killed simply because he was a Republican. He was against Franco and wrote poetry favoring the Republicans. He was just a man, who was 58 years old, and was executed." ■

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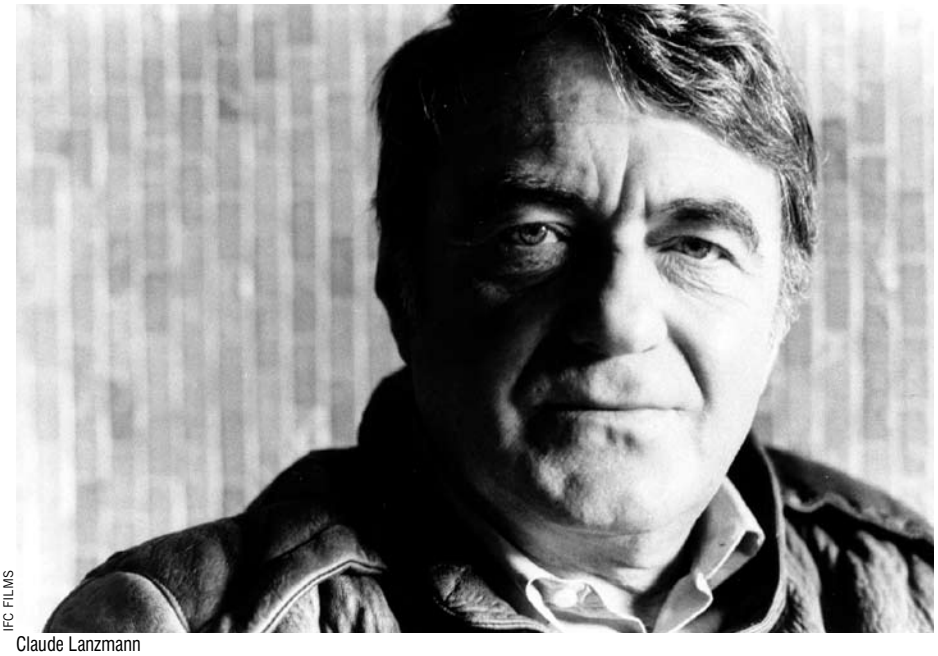

IFC FILMS

Claude Lanzmann

The Year in Movies

by STUART KLAWANS

I know what it is to subscribe to *The Nation*—that sinking of the heart every week as you open the mailbox and think, "Now what's wrong?" That's why this little corner of frivolity at the back of the magazine devotes itself to entertainment as much as art, and tries to bear in mind that movies, though deeply involved in the world's strife, don't actually do the work of politics.

There has to be some relief. And yet, when I push myself to perform every reviewer's duty and look back on The Year in Movies, the sheer leadenness of the frolic makes Oscar Wilde weep among the angels.

Here's how The Year in Movies ended: On December 18 a court in Tehran sentenced Jafar Panahi to six years in prison and banned him from writing scripts and directing films for the next twenty years. That means until he's 70, if he lives that long.

You may recall that Panahi—director of *The White Balloon*, *The Circle*, *Crimson Gold* and *Offside*—had been jailed earlier in 2010 with his colleague Mohammad Rasoulof (director of *Iron Island*) but was released on bail after three months. There was as yet no trial. That formality was finally taken up in November, and now Panahi and Rasoulof are doing hard time in Evin prison. Their crime: having conspired to commit a film, which if completed (according to the government) would have turned out to be "propaganda."

I asked one of the principal scholars of Iranian cinema, Hamid Dabashi, what might be done. He recommended that *Nation* readers encourage the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences to issue a statement to the Iranian House of Cinema in support of Panahi and Rasoulof. "The pressure," he wrote, "must be public, institutional, nongovernmental and above all relentless." So I refer you to Bruce Davis, executive director of AMPAS, at 8949 Wilshire Boulevard, Beverly Hills, CA 90211. Who knows? Maybe the statement can be so public as to be incorporated into the Oscars broadcast.

We can try. And it will give us something better to do about the Oscars than follow the competition.

That frenzy on the red carpet is of course the main business of America's film industry at the end of each Year in Movies. We are expected to think about, browbeaten to recognize, stampeded like a colony of naked mole rats to view only those few films that are confirmed (God knows by whom) as Oscar contenders. I try to be a sport about it; I really do. But there are Panahi and Rasoulof in their cells; and here, demanding attention with the wave of a conspicuously authentic-looking firearm, is *True Grit*.

You cannot find a more impeccably made film, nor one with less apparent reason to exist. After you've marveled at the precision of each setup, camera movement and edit; the faultless modulations of tone among suspense, pathos, humor and excitement; the utter self-assurance of all the performers (starting with Jeff Bridges, that Old Faithful of America's male stars, but crucially including young Hailee Steinfeld in the central role), the experience dissipates like mist. There's nothing left to brood over after you've watched the film—nothing to appreciate more deeply on second or third reflection. Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the experience cancels itself even as you watch, given the indifferent curiosity with which Joel and Ethan Coen call up and then skim over the themes that have long haunted the western, as if they were mere outmoded superstitions to be ticked off a list. Finally the Coens have achieved the goal toward which their cinema has always tended: a perfect void.

Is this what American film as a whole now aspires to, at its high auteurist level? Another of the December contenders, Sofia Coppola's *Somewhere*, left me wondering.

It, too, is a faultlessly crafted object—though one that incorporates a far more inquisitive attitude toward the world, and infinitely more emotional nuance, than *True Grit* cares to encompass. The story of a slacker-era movie star (Stephen Dorff) and his relationship, sometimes neglectful and sometimes flirtatious, with his 11-year-old daughter (Elle Fanning), *Somewhere* is full of droll, disillusioned observations about matters such as the code of celebrity sociability at the Chateau Marmont, the rituals of press junkets (both in Los Angeles and overseas) and the sorts of services that the fortunate among us can hire. (I hadn't known they could get call-in pole dancers, let alone identical twins.) It's reassuring to be told that the luxury I can't afford is so sleazy that I wouldn't want it. *Somewhere* does, however, put on display an enviable store of intellectual capital, as shown in Coppola's restrained, often wordless direction. To cite just one example of this contrasting wealth: notice the smart way Coppola introduces the daughter, in a shot that at first tricks you into thinking the girl is another of the star's one-night blondes.

There's much to enjoy along the way in *Somewhere*, and much to admire; so why at the end did I feel so empty? No doubt it's because of the vacuum in the main character, a man with so few thoughts and so little to do that he seems like the entourage of his own Ferrari. "I'm not even a person," he cries late in the film, in a moment of self-awareness that the character, as portrayed till that

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point, probably would not have been able to achieve. I will take Coppola's word for it that such people exist in Hollywood, and that it's wrong, wrong, wrong for the world to adore them. But to wrap an exquisite movie around this moral seems futile to me—as futile as the life contained in the beautiful package. I admire *Somewhere*, ultimately, for nothing—which was the very best I could say for most American films in 2010.

But to drop the pretense of writing about The Year in Movies and own up to the truth, which is that I can speak (like everyone else) only of *my* year in movies: the great disappointment of 2010 was that I failed to review so many good films. The supply of them—pictures that were well made and meaningful, too—outstripped my capacity to keep up. I have commented in these pages on *Carlos* (the one obviously great film released in 2010), *A Prophet*, *Wild Grass*, *Life During Wartime*, *The Social Network*, *Inside Job*, *Last Train Home*, *The Illusionist*, *The Kids Are All Right* and *Lebanon* (to stop arbitrarily at ten). But I can easily name another five that were neglected here, until now.

The year's best political thriller was Roman Polanski's *The Ghost Writer*, based on a novel by Robert Harris: a wickedly clever revenge fantasy directed against a British prime minister much like Tony Blair (very handsomely and desperately portrayed by Pierce Brosnan) whose enthusiasm for the American-led "war on terror" left him in affluent disgrace. The cleverness lay in Polanski's direction, laid out as neatly as a cryptogram. The wickedness was that the film visited its ultimate revenge not on the PM but on the title character (Ewan McGregor), a man much like the average moviegoer: smart enough to see through some lies but not the whole lot, moral enough to begin doing right but not powerful enough to finish.

Winter's Bone by Debra Granik was the year's outstanding film from the wasted American heartland: in this case a part of rural Missouri where "modernity" means that meth labs have replaced moonshine stills. Apart from that, the old truths remain: family is destiny, legal authority is despised and men must not beat women outside their clan. Jennifer Lawrence played the young woman who valiantly defied these rules in part, while staying true to them as a whole.

Never Let Me Go, based on a novel by Kazuo Ishiguro and directed by Mark Romanek, outdid every other sci-fi movie of the year by working on you as quietly as a slow-acting drug. Physically, the film's alternate reality was the same as ours, only prettier. Socially, it was distressingly superior, if you believe in the principle of maximizing good for the greatest number of people. Emotionally, though, this parallel world was an ever-deepening chasm, where Carey Mulligan, Keira Knightley and Andrew Garfield got to linger a little, heartbreakingly, before dropping from sight.

Speaking of drops into chasms: Tim Burton's *Alice in Wonderland* was the best of many films in 2010 released unnecessarily in 3-D. Ingeniously discovering a mature, fighting heroine in one of Tenniel's illustrations (where she turns out to have been hiding in plain sight), Burton created an Alice capable of triumph in a Wonderland where "Off with his head!" had become the least of threats. "I really learned something," my daughter volunteered on our way out of the theater. "A girl has to make up her own mind." Which is a lot more than she got from *Toy Story 3*.

Finally, in the category of odd, affecting little documentaries, perhaps the best of the year was Jeff Malmberg's *Marwencol*. The title is the name of a Belgian town—an imaginary one, where it's forever World War II—which Mark Hogancamp of Kingston, New York, painstakingly built at scale model using plastic dolls and hobby-shop materials. This project was his self-prescribed occupational and psychological therapy, after a severe beating outside a bar left him with neither memories nor normal motor functions. The film gradually reveals why Hogancamp was beaten, how he changed afterward and what became of his fantasy town; but best of all, Malmberg brings his camera right into the model, to show you a Marwencol as large and vivid as its creator needs it to be.

As for the single most important event in film in 2010, I'd have to say it was the twenty-fifth-anniversary release of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*.

So many documentaries about the subject have appeared since 1985, and so many fiction films, that the contours of Lanzmann's work had begun to blur into a generalized notion of "Holocaust movie," even for those of us who knew better. As for the generation that came to maturity without ever being able to see the nine and a half hours of *Shoah* in a theater, how could they guess what Lanzmann had perpetrated? You expect a Holocaust movie to make you bow your head as if at a memorial service, or excite you with its horrific display. It's not supposed to be a scandal in itself—huge, insolent and undefined.

To classify *Shoah* as a history clearly won't do, as Lanzmann has said. It's not just that he refused to show archival images, insisting instead on recording the traces that the Holocaust had left on the present day. He also would not summarize the overall sequence of events, entertain discussions of political and economic forces, reproduce anyone else's documentary evidence (that was all assumed) or even confine his materials to a straight chronology. Lanzmann jumped around thematically, without telling you what the themes were; he spiraled back obsessively, and without explanation, to the same railway lines, the same landscapes, even the same shots.

I have no name for a film that proceeds like this; but I can tell you what it does.

Shoah evokes absence: the death camps reduced to brick outlines in empty fields, the mass graves dug up and burned to destroy the evidence, the old Jewish villages now thriving without Jews, the survivors (every one an anomaly) in their terrifying isolation. Using the words of eyewitnesses—words in Yiddish, German, Polish, English, Hebrew, Italian—*Shoah* recounts in detail how this absence was produced, from the Nazis' first clumsy improvisations to the logistical perfection of Auschwitz; and just as important, *Shoah* reveals what remains of the process in people's voices, faces and attitudes. Through persistent questioning, gentle encouragement, brusque confrontation, even clandestine recording—whatever he deems appropriate—Lanzmann brings out the sobs suppressed by a death camp barber, the horror that has never stopped contorting an emissary to the Warsaw ghetto, the bland duplicity of a former high-ranking Nazi official (who pretends that Lanzmann is the one with all the information), the Jew-hatred still voiced without embarrassment by Polish townspeople in the 1980s.

And always, as the voices go on, there are those calm, 360-degree pans of snowy landscapes, those tracking shots taken from rattling old trains. Worst of all: there's the supreme evocation of absence in the montage of normal, everyday life in a Warsaw shopping district.

There is a logic in the way Lanzmann puts all this together; but there is also something monstrous and misshapen, which is utterly irreconcilable with notions of monuments and masterpieces. And that, as much as the staggering amount of research that went into the film, is what makes *Shoah* so right. It's brilliantly conceived; it's intolerable. It is the indispensable film of any year when it appears. ■

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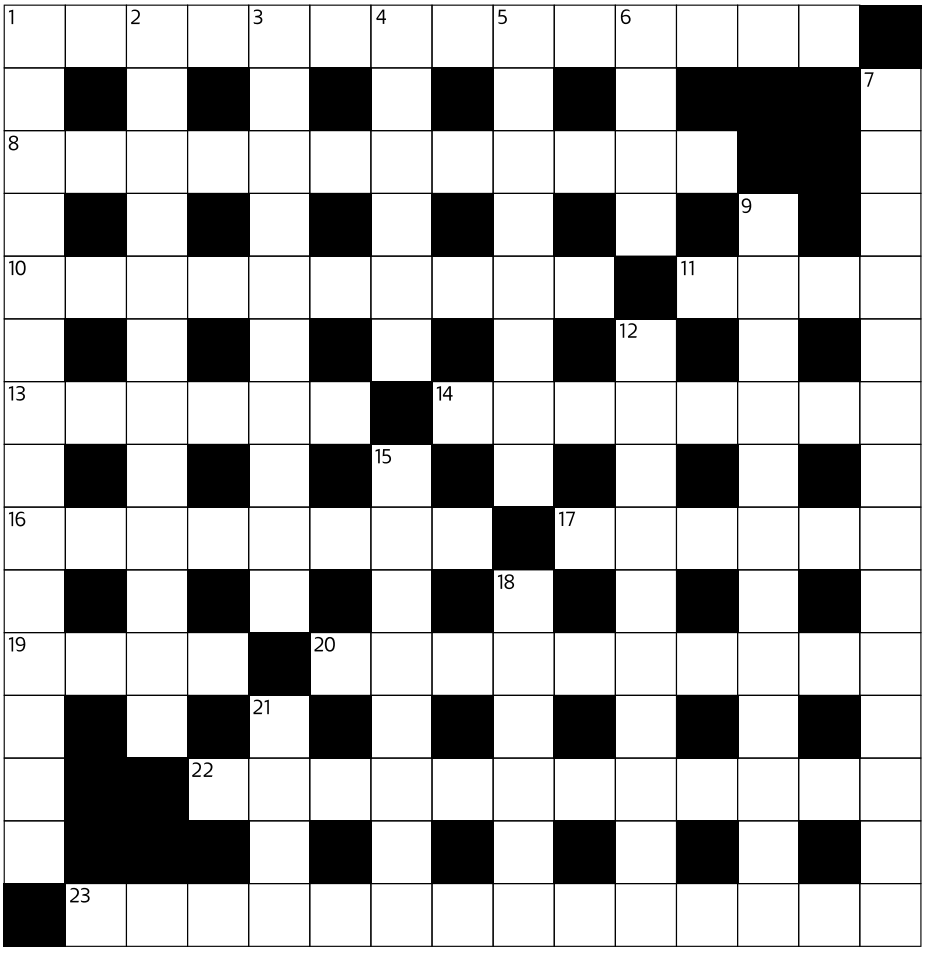


ACROSS

1 One could thwart climbers for cocoanuts, as a favor-seeker might. (6,4,4)

8 The way one ordinarily goes? (7,5)

10 Plots are likely to be involved in such business. (4,6)

11 Not a natural habitation for some, which might be patched up. (4)

13 A small untidy group of animals. (6)

14 Provisional officer has another spell on the trip to Canterbury. (8)

16 A piece of cloth returned repeatedly with a solidifying agent. (4-4)

17 Style of a bird that's fabulous with nothing firm but abbreviated. (6)

19 It might be clever to make a bow. (4)

20 Getting in the act, but leaving something behind? (6,4)

22 Darts back, in common parlance. (12)

23 Helicopters often do. (3,2,3,6)

DOWN

1 Army chief of staff, possibly, or one in firm control. (7,7)

2 It might be an absurd statement, but the breakdown of the next car gave a different answer. (12)

3 Might such a child be found in the way? (6,4)

4 A religious person, more or less round, but somewhat out of shape. (6)

5 Happening under certain circumstances. (8)

6 Dance movement taken up by such as dogs and cats. (4)

7 It might imply seasonal choice. (1,6,2,5)

9 One might say he can't help himself, yet he does. (12)

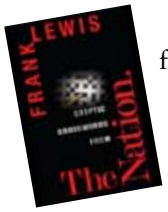
12 It's a formal English pardon, yet might be a performance by one from Monaco. (3,2,5)

15 Something like Niagara might not be pleasant in the eye of the beholder. (8)

18 See how often one number contains another! (6)

21 A sign that one's first impression is correct. (4)

This puzzle originally appeared in the January 24, 1976, issue.



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What are the facts?

■ **Myth:** The "Palestinians" are a nation and therefore deserving of a homeland.

Reality: The concept of Palestinian nationhood is a new one and had not been heard of until after the Six-Day War (1967), when Israel, by its victory, came into the administration of the territories of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip. The so-called "Palestinians" are no more different from the Arabs living in the neighboring countries of Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, than Wisconsinites are from Iowans.

■ **Myth:** Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and the Gaza Strip are/were "occupied Arab territory."

Reality: All of "Palestine" — east and west of the Jordan River — was part of the League of Nations mandate. Under the Balfour Declaration, all of it was to be the "national home for the Jewish people." In violation of this mandate, Great Britain severed the entire area east of the Jordan River — about 75% of Palestine — and gave it to the Arabs, who created on it the kingdom of Transjordan. When Israel declared its independence in 1948, five Arab armies invaded the new country in order to destroy it at its very birth. They were defeated by the Israelis. The Transjordanians, however, remained in occupation of Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") and East Jerusalem. They proceeded to drive all Jews from those territories and to systematically destroy all Jewish houses of worship and other institutions. The Transjordanians (now renamed "Jordanians") were the occupiers for nineteen years. Israel regained these territories following its victory in the Six-Day War. Israel has returned the entire Gaza Strip to the Palestinians. The final status of the "West Bank" will be decided if and when the Palestinians will finally be able to sit down and seriously talk peace with Israel.

> "Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!"

■ **Myth:** Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") are the "greatest obstacle to peace."

Reality: This is simply not correct, although it has been repeated so often that many have come to believe it. The greatest obstacle to peace is the intransigence and the irreconcilable hostility of the Arabs. Not more than 400,000 Jews are settled in these territories, living among about 1.4 million Arabs. How can Jews living there be an obstacle to peace? Why shouldn't they live there? Over 2 million Arabs live in Israel proper. They are not an obstacle to peace. Neither the Israelis nor they themselves consider them as such.

■ **Myth:** Israel is unwilling to yield "land for peace."

Reality: The concept that to the loser, rather than to the victor, belong the spoils is a radically new one. Israel, victorious in the five wars imposed on it by the Arabs, has returned over 90% of the territory occupied by it: the vast Sinai Peninsula, which contained some of the most advanced military installations, prosperous cities and oil fields developed entirely by Israel that made it independent of pertroleum imports. For the return of Gaza Israel was "rewarded" with constant rocket attacks. In the Camp David Accords, Israel agreed to autonomy for Judea and Samaria (the "West Bank") with the permanent status to be determined after three years. But, so far, no responsible Palestinian representation has been available to seriously negotiate with Israel about this.

All these myths (and others we shall talk about) have poisoned the atmosphere for decades. The root cause of the never-ending conflict is the unwillingness of the Arabs (and not just the Palestinians) to accept the reality of Israel. What a pity that those of the Palestinians who are not Israeli citizens have lived and continue to live in poverty, misery and ignorance. They could have chosen to accept the proposed partition of the country in 1947, would now have had their state alongside Israel for over sixty years and could have lived in peace and prosperity. They could have kept hundreds of thousands of refugees in their homes and could have saved tens of thousands of lives. Peace will only come when the Arabs finally accept the reality of Israel. And that is not a myth — that is a fact!

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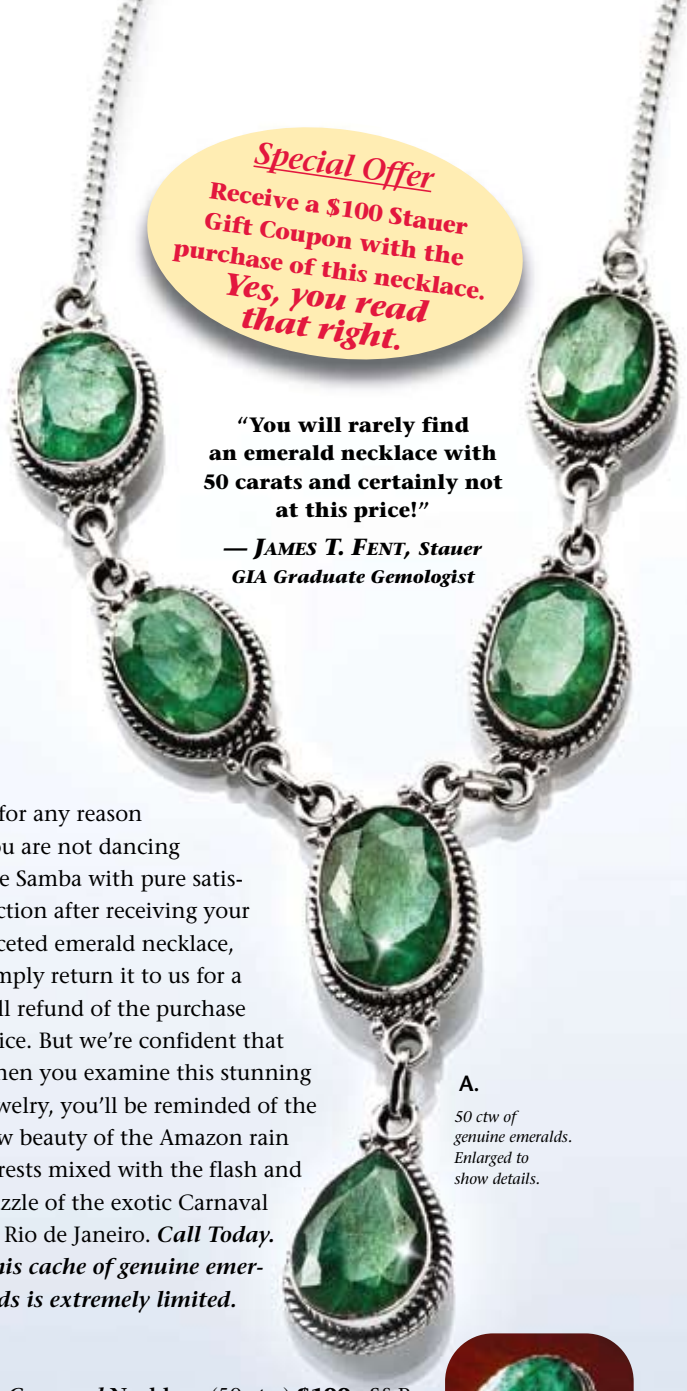

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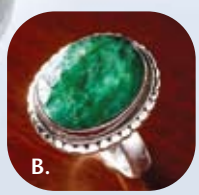
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